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THE ADVENTURES OF A NEWSPAPER MAN

THE ADVENTURES OF
A NEWSPAPER MAN

BY
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THE ADVENTURES OF A NEWSPAPER MAN

CHAPTER I

THE MODERN REPORTER

The word "reporter" means a good deal more than it used to mean, for nowadays, on a popular and successful paper, the reporter is not just a man who takes down speeches in shorthand. He is a diplomat, business organiser, detective, man of affairs, politician, all rolled into one. Ready must be his tongue; quick his decision. He must be prepared to take chances, and take them quickly. He must know how not to be brow-beaten by those in high places. The exchanges of the dog fancier in the East End must find him with the same acquainted mind as the conversation of the peeress's guests assembled for a Tariff Reform afternoon in a Belgrave Square drawing-room. Like the soldier, he must be prepared for almost

every kind of emergency, some of them pleasant, some of them unpleasant. He must never expect regular hours; and night and day must be the slave of his paper. There is the modern reporter. It is easy to see, therefore, how very different a man he is in essentials from the man, however furnished with book knowledge, however well-armed with the magic speed of shorthand, who in the past has done so much for newspaper work.

Some critics say that unscrupulousness goes with the new methods. It all depends on what one means by unscrupulousness. The modern reporter has an almost religious devotion to the cause of his paper. He may curse his proprietors (he certainly does curse his editors); but ever and always he puts his paper first at whatever cost to himself of effort and ingenuity. He realises, too, that he is out to do things and not merely to turn out half a column of what other people do. Fleet Street rings with unpublished stories of reporters' efforts, humorous and serious, successful and unsuccessful, during the past ten years or so.

A few years ago a friend of mine was sent from the reporting-room of a well-known London paper to write up a short narrative of the facts affecting the hungry unemployed in one of the

London suburbs. It was winter. The Guardians had refused to help. The hungry men were grouped together, half-angry, half-desperate, in so far as spirits broken by privation left them any force or will for anger or desperation. I dare say a good many of them were wasters, but the majority of them, it is pretty certain, were honest men who could not get work, who were suffering from want of food and from cold, and it is certain, too, that some of them had wives and children who were suffering. These were the men descended upon by the bright and capable young reporter from Fleet Street. They were goading themselves on to action when he arrived. They told themselves that something must be done, and they appointed a deputation of about a dozen to go down to the Union offices where the Guardians were sitting to demand an audience. The deputation started off. The reporter went with them—exhilarated by the thought of a good stirring story for the paper. He was a keen young man, and, like most of his craft, a warm-hearted fellow, but when there was work to be done questions of humanity did not enter in; and thus it came about that this young reporter, not very troubled at the sight of these men, went with them quite cheerfully to the office of the Guardians. Arrived

at the imposing front gates, the courage of the deputation sank a little, and even as they rang the bell and waited a chilly silence crept over them. They waited dully. Presently the gates were opened by an official in uniform, who listened austerely to the men's mild request for an interview with the Guardians, and then refused them with the announcement that the Guardians were sitting in meeting and could not be intruded upon. The air of officialdom and authority had its effect. Weakly enough, one or two of the men asked that their mission should be explained to the representatives of the public within. Authority swelled itself, and almost curtly the men were rebuffed. Discouraged and demoralised, the deputation had so far descended in spirit as to be prepared to stomach the refusal. For a moment or two they stood hesitating, half cowed. Aghast at the anti-climax, the reporter made himself busy. Quietly but decisively he urged the men to make a stand.

"Why are you here?" he said vigorously. "You must not allow yourselves to be browbeaten. Demand that you are attended to. Don't give way."

The men were invigorated in spite of themselves. The door-keeper muttered a word of reproof at the reporter, whom he considered the

ringleader. The group eddied. There were a few seconds of parleying at the door. The official tried to close it.

"Don't be pushed back," cried the reporter. "This place is the property of the public. Go right in. Push your way in. Demand attention."

Spirit began to awaken. Some of the deputation pressed forward. The alarmed door-keeper tried vainly to push them out.

"In with you," cried the reporter. And then with a rush the men went forward, sweeping the attendant to one side. How, to the horror of the officials, they progressed through the corridors to the board-room; how they secured an audience and obtained promises of help from the Guardians; all these things are subsidiary to my tale. I am only showing the kind of man who succeeds in the new journalism. I would like to have rounded off the narration by telling how the capable young reporter had been moved to compassion by the men and had acted on their behalf from the best of motives. But, alas! it has to be recorded that he was only anxious to secure an exclusive story; only concerned with the interests of his paper. But one may be excused the pleasing reflection that his paper was a Conservative journal, that strong opinions

about the iniquity of setting class against class were among its cherished doctrines.

Enterprise is not always so successful, and big efforts do not always meet with their reward. Let me put in here the story of a failure. It is worth telling for itself, and illustrates the ingenuity exercised in connection with the simpler problems of a newspaper. The incident is connected with the return of troops from South Africa after the Boer War. Part of a famous regiment which had had remarkable successes and adventures was on its way to Southampton in a liner. Stories from men of the regiment were eagerly waited for, and many newspapers sent down representatives to Southampton to get aboard the vessel at the earliest possible moment, so that after obtaining interviews with the soldiers here and there they might telegraph a narrative, perhaps running to two columns, to headquarters in London.

One paper set forth to beat all its competitors. This journal had a correspondent who was coming home in the ship from South Africa, and who was thus in a position to collect interesting matter at his leisure and to formulate it into an article ready for his journal immediately on arrival. The newspaper desired to have this story, or at any rate the first part of it, before the other newspapers could interview the returning regiment.

Arrangements were accordingly made for a tug to go off and meet the liner. The dispatch was to be secured in a well-corked bottle which was to be tossed from the deck of the liner into the water. All went well up to a certain point. The liner with the returning soldiers was sighted; the boat with the representative from London put off to meet her; and it looked as though there was to be a real scoop for the paper which had organised the business. As the tug approached the liner it was cheered by hundreds of men who were looking over the side. "I am from the *Daily* ——," shouted the man in the tug, as he looked eagerly for the descent of the fateful bottle. And then in response there came from the crowded side of the liner not one bottle, but hundreds of bottles, a straggling, scattered volley. Never has there been such a fusillade from a peaceful-minded ship. Amid those innumerable and widely scattered bottles, bobbing up and down in the waves, there was no chance of alighting on the right one. Storms of laughter swept the crowded sides of the liner.

The correspondent on the liner, with a rare indiscretion, had talked about his mission and boldly proclaimed the method. Secret preparations had been immediately made, and every kind of bottle pressed into requisition for the fateful

moment, and on the approach of the tug the men, with the bottles in their hands or in their pockets, had hurried to the side. That shower of bottles will never be forgotten by those who were privileged to enjoy it.

Neither of these two incidents came within my personal knowledge, but they are just common stories of the new Fleet Street, and worth recording because they give an indication of life behind the newspaper veil. We shall come to soberer things presently.

When I came up to Fleet Street, after three and a half years as a local reporter, I had to make, within a week, a quick acquaintance with the sides of London not open to the outsider. I was on the staff of the news agency known as the Central News, and I had to dive at once into the official reservoirs of information. I learned, for instance, how between four and five o'clock each afternoon representatives of the three news agencies, including the Central News, were received at the Foreign Office, at the Colonial Office, and at the Prime Minister's house, 10, Downing Street. Sometimes there would be no information to impart; sometimes lengthy official statements; again, at other times, statements which were not to be stamped as official, but which were nevertheless as authoritative as could be imagined.

Sometimes we had long waits in the ante-chambers of the offices. Occasionally we suffered from superb official scorn—though generally our relations with official representatives were quite pleasant. I remember very particularly one of Lord Salisbury's secretaries, a most charming man. We had often to bother the great departments with regard to news in the daytime, and as this secretary hated to refuse a request he was among our most frequent victims. Harass him on a particularly busy day, and he came towards you carrying in his eyes the warm light of the man who knows no greater happiness than an unexpected meeting. He was tall and debonair. His voice was soft. His great gift was the making of a disappointing answer extremely pleasant and he was really pained when he was able to give no help. One would say to him: "About that affair in Afghanistan—is there really no news?"

"Ah, now," he would say with his finger on his lip and a look of reflectiveness in his eyes, "Afghanistan, let me see. About Afghanistan—I don't think so. But if you wouldn't mind waiting a minute I will go up myself right away now to the department and find out." And then he would hurry off along the great corridor in the Foreign Office and stand behind a large pillar at the other end for a minute or so, and come back and say,

with an air of deep regret: "Very sorry. Not one single word from Afghanistan for twenty-four hours. Not a line of any kind." You would go off feeling grateful for the courtesy and for the kindly effort which the Prime Minister's secretary had made on one's behalf. If, as might happen, a few hours later the Foreign Office sent out for publication a statement as to some striking occurrence in Afghanistan, one felt no touch of resentment—just a gleam of admiration, that is all.

I remember an occasion at one of the three offices I have mentioned when the principal secretary of a Cabinet Minister, who has since progressed by birth and influence, and, perhaps, also by ability, to a high position in the State, sent out to us in the waiting-room to ask if we could remain a little as he had something to communicate to us. Such an intimation implied a pronouncement of importance—possibly a Cabinet decision; and the three of us composed ourselves in the knowledge that we should have a message of national importance to give to the world within a few hours. We were kept waiting longer than we expected. We excused the highly-placed secretary because we realised that a very big announcement might have to be carefully worded, might require consultation between Ministers, might even have to be submitted to the Sovereign

before it went out to the public. In spite of saying these things to each other, however, we were getting restive when an hour had passed and the secretary had not come in to us. We had not long to wait after this, however. He walked in, a fine figure of a young man, glowing with pride and eagerness. "I have asked you gentlemen to wait," he said, "because I have something I should like to get into the papers." We took out a sheet of paper each. The secretary hesitated. "My wife had a son this morning, and we thought we would like it published." One of my two colleagues, the senior of the three of us, rose to the occasion nobly. He tore his piece of paper into little fragments and said coldly: "Yes. Interesting, I am sure, but not quite of sufficient importance for the *morning* papers."

I came to know the meaning of the term "semi-official" as applied to communications to the papers. On the day before the opening of Parliament Lord Salisbury's principal secretary would come into the ante-room where my two colleagues and myself were in waiting, and would dictate to us the general trend of the Queen's Speech to be read in Parliament on the following day. We were not to state whence the information was derived, nor were we to indicate that it was official, but at the same time we were allowed

to suggest that it was authoritative. And thus the world was acquainted on the following morning with what was to be in the Queen's Speech on the coming afternoon. When Queen Victoria died and King Edward came to the Throne this was brought to an end. We learned that King Edward intended that there should be no forecast of his Speech in the House of Lords, but that it should come fresh and hot from his lips to the public. Every one knew then, as before, that the Speech from the Throne was the composition of the Government of the day, and there was thus a very human touch in the decision of the King that, little as he had to do with the framing of the Government programme, he intended to preserve to himself the satisfaction of giving his Ministers' programme personally to the country. From the time of the accession of King Edward, therefore, there were no more semi-official forecasts of the Speech.

The leading secretary of Lord Salisbury in these days used to come down and tell us other things on occasions. For instance, when the birthday honours were issued he would inform us, not officially, but conversationally, of the distinguishing features in the careers of the recipients. In a roundabout way they were, of course, the reasons why the honours were conferred. Perhaps

one should say the ostensible reasons, for the conferring of honours is to a large extent one of those State processes which are veiled off from the public gaze.

It was during this period that I became acquainted with most of the principal Embassies and Legations in London, for there were frequently calls to be made at one or the other of them in connection with international matters. You cannot get much information from a first or second secretary, to say nothing of a Minister or an Ambassador, but all the same they are extremely pleasant people to meet, and if they find it possible to give assistance they have no hidebound opinions about not assisting the Press. The most difficult place was the Russian Embassy, access to which was almost impossible by reason of the fact that a huge Cossack person guarded the entrance to the courtyard at Chesham Place, with a manner towards Pressmen derived presumably from his native land. The American Ambassador at the time, Mr. Choate, was generally accessible, but being a wit as well as a diplomat, he got over many difficulties by talking on matters entirely irrelevant to the subject of one's call. As was only to be expected, courtesy at the French Embassy was ever predominant; and indeed there was more than courtesy, because frequently a

good deal of help was given in connection with public matters. Baron Hayaishi, the Japanese Minister, was one of the kindest and one of the most unconventional of all the diplomatists, and his readiness to receive journalists in Grosvenor Gardens was only equalled by his willingness to be interviewed on public matters—in which, it should be added, he differed from almost every other leading diplomatist I ever knew. I must not forget to mention the Chinese Minister of the time, Sir Chi Chen Lo Fen Gluh. He had a difficult and delicate position at the time I write of, for it was in those troublous and menacing weeks when the Boxers were creating complications, and the fate of Europeans in China was causing intense anxiety in London. The Chinese legation in Portland Place was set upon from hour to hour by journalists, who desired to know anything as to the state of affairs which might have reached the Minister by telegram. I went there each morning. Sometimes I saw Sir Chi Chen Lo Fen Gluh, more frequently I saw one of the attachés. Unfailing urbanity, unfailing hopefulness, were the externals which I encountered. When I sought explanations not merely in respect of current happenings but with regard to incidental matters in connection with the uprising, those explanations were always forthcoming in full.

One may be forgiven, perhaps, for thinking that a delicate and skilful evasion was sometimes brought into play. It is certain that the officials had a most trying time. More than once I suspected that they brought a sense of humour to their aid. Mr. Wu was among the secretaries, and I can see him now as I write, with his smooth boyish face, and his pig-tail, as he came in to see me on one of my morning visits. Representing a news agency, I was out for hot facts, and consequently my first questions were directed towards acquiring any information which had come to hand and which had not yet been published. On securing anything of the kind it was my part to hurry to the nearest telephone and dictate it over the wire to the office at Fleet Street. Perhaps on this occasion Mr. Wu felt he had been a little reticent for a few days and that he ought to help me to something good, because directly I said to him, "Have you received any fresh news from China?" he replied, "Yes, yes; certainly." A pencil was in my hand immediately.

"Can I take it down?" I asked.

"Of course. Very pleased," he replied, with an eagerness which matched my own. Then, speaking in slow and imperfect English, he went on: "We—have received—a telegram—that the Emperor—has issued edict—that all Europeans—

in Pekin be supplied—with food and—be protected from injury."

I took down his words diligently. He went on to amplify the message. Half a dozen sentences forward I experienced a sense of familiarity with the phrases, and presently I stopped and said: "But did this not all appear in the daily papers three days ago?"

"Yes, yes," he said, with an expression of the blandest surprise and a quaint look as to the relevancy of my inquiry.

That is why I suspect the Chinese officials of humour.

Sir Chi Chen Lo Fen Gluh, the Minister himself, was a man of ability, and also, it may be added, of powerful suavity. One morning Dr. Morrison, the celebrated correspondent, had stated in the *Times* that a good deal of information was in the possession of the Chinese Legation officials as to what was going on in China, in spite of the fact that they maintained an attitude of completest ignorance. It is possible that Dr. Morrison was mistaken, but it was my duty, on the part of the Central News, to go up to the Chinese Minister and put it to him that he was concealing facts from this country which this country had a right to know. I was ushered into the reception-room on the first floor of the

Legation, and took the preliminary precaution of seating myself with my back to the window, so that I might have the advantage of seeing the Minister's face in the light while mine was in the shadow. A minute later the Minister himself was ushered in. He greeted me with a gesture of cordiality and dignity. An imposing figure he was in his native robes. After shaking hands I made to return to my seat. He was perfectly ready for the occasion. With a grace of manner which required to be seen to be appreciated he laid a hand on the back of the chair which I had mentally designated for himself, and extending his other hand practically waved me into it. When I was safely seated there he then proceeded to take the chair which I had previously occupied, thus securing for himself the advantage which I, in my youthful arrogance, had thought was mine for the choosing. Vanquished indeed was the reporter.

I explained the situation to the Minister, and, wrapping the meaning in polite phrases, I suggested that he was face to face with the accusation of being a liar. Was he excited or angry? Not he. Kindly complacency radiated from him. "Dr. Morrison is making a mistake," he said, in a mild, almost a casual, tone. That was his reply. He had nothing more to express except courteous

commonplaces and regrets that I should have been put to the trouble of calling upon him in regard to a suggestion which had no foundation in fact.

Encounters with famous men are part of the routine of the modern reporter's life, and there are so widely-differing men that no week's work is without its special interest. I have chased after many men and women in my time—sometimes with success, sometimes with failure. Occasionally I have had to chase people who have been intent on avoiding newspaper men, but rarely have I been met with resentment even when pertinacity and ingenuity were employed to secure a talk with an unwilling person. It was while I was on the Central News that General Sir William Gatacre, a gallant soldier, who met with disaster in the war, came home to this country in something like official disgrace. He had possessed a great reputation: in the Soudan under Kitchener his energy had secured for him the name of "Back-acher" among the soldiers, for he spared no effort in his men, spared himself least of all, and he was as brave a fighter as he was an indefatigable worker. It is related of him how at the great fight at Atbara he forgot his duties as commander, leaped ahead of his men sword in hand, and was the first over the trenches and among

the enemy. That was the man who by some blunder suffered a reverse at Stormburg in South Africa. He came back to England, and merciless newspapers sought to interview him. Somehow or other he avoided all journalists on arrival; he avoided them at Southampton, and he avoided them at Waterloo station when he arrived in town. It was known that he was to stay in London, but the reference books gave no indication of his whereabouts. Hotel after hotel, club after club, was tried that night by reporters scouring the West End of London. The search was in vain. I, in common with others, was looking for the trail again throughout the next day. I discovered nothing. On the following morning, thinking over the affair, I hit on a possible plan of ascertaining his whereabouts, for by accident I had noticed that he was married to the daughter of Lord Davey, one of the Law Lords. I took a cab from Charing Cross to Lord Davey's residence off Bond Street. I rang the bell and was answered by a footman, of whom I asked, "Is Sir William in?" Taken off his guard, the man replied, "Oh no, sir, he is staying at No. —, Upper Burlington Gardens." So I went to Upper Burlington Gardens and presently secured General Gatacre as he came in to dinner. He was a straight-backed, spare man, with serious, alert eyes. There was

something mild and reflective about him. A little hesitatingly I explained my mission to him—which was to get a statement with regard to his experiences in South Africa and his subsequent return to this country. He was not in the least offended. On the contrary, he conquered me by his gentleness. "Suppose," he said, "you had returned to England from the war in similar circumstances to myself. Would you have consented to be interviewed about the matter?" I replied that I would say no single word. And thus it was that the Central News had nothing to send out in the shape of an interview with General Gatacre.

It was during my two years on the Central News (1900–2) that the *Daily Mail* was extending and securing its hold on the popular favour and proving that the new journalism had not only come to stay, but was going to oust completely the older methods and the older results. An enormous circulation had already been obtained. Its unconventional procedure in giving prominence to what was of interest instead of merely to what was considered of importance, its rigid rule that every line in the paper should be justified by its interest to a wide circle, its adoption of extremely short articles, its idea of influencing people through its news columns, as well as of recording facts in them —all these things had not only made the *Daily*

Mail, but had already brought about something like a revolution in journalism generally. The contempt of the older journals had long since given way to anger at what they considered sensationalism, and by now was taking the form of an effort to impart new life into their own columns. Another daily paper, the *Express*, had started somewhat on the lines of the *Daily Mail*. All round there was working a ferment. Journalism was acknowledging, too, that the policy of employing young men who could do things as well as write about things was having results hitherto unknown in British newspaper life. Alfred Harmsworth was showing every one that it paid not merely to have correspondents in war time who could go out and meet adventure, but that it paid extremely well to have all the time young men who could go out at home, as well as abroad, and get into what, in fact, were adventures among the ordinary life of the people. The *Daily Mail* had already become a catchword when I was offered an appointment on its reporting staff.

CHAPTER II

THE MASTER OF THE MOAT

In spite of the stories which find their way into magazines, the modern criminal is not at all romantic, being as a rule quite unoriginal, and apart from the question of morals altogether, a thoroughly depressing person. He reeks of sordidness, and there is no attraction in him. Once in a way, however, a force breaks out amongst middling criminality, and a desperate spirit, unrestricted by the ties of ordinary feeling, enacts dramas. But a giant temperament is needed. When a man takes theft or forgery, and even murder, as a step in self-advancement, then he is an abnormality not to be comprehended by ordinary standards. I have seen such a man. He was hanged, and justly hanged, for murder; and murderer though he was, he was the bravest man I have seen.

The story begins with an announcement in the

evening papers one afternoon in the early part of 1903 that a prisoner arrested in connection with a supposed bank fraud in the City had, while being conveyed to the police station, made a sudden attempt to wrestle free from the detective and get away from custody by a sudden dash. It was what we call a good evening-paper story. Little did any one of us think that it was the beginning of a very far-reaching narrative. The prisoner, who was recaptured, was by name Samuel Herbert Dougal, and was accused of attempting to pass a forged cheque at the Bank of England. Previous visits to the Bank for money had aroused suspicion. Evidence had been collected, and a detective was in waiting and had arrested Dougal at the Bank. On their way from the Bank to Old Jewry, a couple of hundred yards or so away, Dougal had made his dash for liberty—an unsuccessful dash. He was taken to the station and locked up pending a hearing before the magistrates. That was all the world was to know for the present. And it was days and weeks before the public began to take a vivid interest in this middle-aged man charged with forgery.

Samuel Herbert Dougal was not, in the common acceptance of the term, an educated man, for he came of working-class stock, and had served as a soldier in the Army. For all this, he was no

common man. Pleasant and calm in manner, with confident voice and warm eyes, he was always, by his nature, certain to attract attention, certain of a kind of popularity, certain of a measure of affection from any group or any community with which he came in contact. There are many things in the life of this extraordinary man which are not known and never will be known. It is sufficient to say that he found himself back in England trying various means of livelihood when he was approaching forty years of age. Some five years or so before that sensational evening in the City, when he struggled with the detective, he had met a maiden lady, considerably older than himself, named Miss Holland, a lady who possessed means and who had few relatives in the world. She was delicate and cultured, of different upbringing, of different ideas, and of a different world altogether, physically, mentally, and spiritually, from Dougal. Some chance threw the two together in an accidental meeting; at least, at this distance, one supposes it was accidental. The rough man, who had worked with his hands, was no clod to Miss Holland, and from the first he had a mysterious power over her, as he had over many others. It was not long before she capitulated. She did so unknown to her friends and acquaintances. He went down

with her to a remote farm in Essex, miles away from a railway station, and with no house within call of the residence, and appropriately enough for a secret drama, the place was called the Moat Farm, because some of the farm-buildings were partly encircled by a winding lake. Groves of trees were here, an orchard, farmyards, various erections, spreading meadows, and arable fields. So remote was the place that a horse and trap was regarded as a necessity for any visitor who wished to go to it, and of course a vehicle was required by the residents. For a time Dougal and Miss Holland lived at this place in peace and, perhaps, in amity.

Dougal, a man of strong presence, began to be known by the scattered rustics as "The Master of the Moat." The nearest town of any size or importance was Saffron Walden, several miles away, and it was to this place Dougal used to drive from time to time for the purpose of business or to establish communication with the outer world. Miss Holland's nearest relative was a nephew, who lived in the south of London, but he was unaware of his aunt's act or anything of her life. She had been in the habit of travelling a good deal and of spending months at a time on the Continent, and it was at irregular intervals that he had news of her or saw her. When,

however, between two and three years had passed without any direct communication, he became anxious, and proceeded to make inquiries, and eventually sought the aid of the police. It was found that Miss Holland had gone to the Moat Farm with Dougal. Then came the surprise. She had since disappeared from the Moat Farm, Dougal remaining on alone. Where had she gone? What had happened to her? Was she away temporarily only? Was she travelling again, intending to return to Essex? It looked like it, because cheques signed by her were being presented at the Bank, as of old.

Facts were such as to generate suspicion, and very quickly suspicion arose. Vague and undefined doubts sprang to the minds of relatives and detectives. Inquiries were pushed afield. Dougal was watched. Was he responsible for her absence? Had he driven her away by cruelty, abuse, or persecution, and taken means to secure her money? Suspicions of something even worse began to shape themselves. Doubt lay over the whole matter, because it could not be ascertained with certainty when Miss Holland had disappeared from the Moat Farm. Meanwhile Dougal, a highly-respected resident, had become a fairly well-known figure in the locality. He was the popular kind of man to whom the country people touched their

hats, and in his way "the Master of the Moat" was a village celebrity.

What was found out by the relatives and the detectives seemed to show that Dougal was using, either with or without authority, the money of Miss Holland. At any rate, there seemed evidence that he was signing her cheques. And thus it came about that he was arrested in the City.

He was charged with forgery and remanded by the magistrates. The preliminary story quickly got hold of the public imagination. The authorities began to arouse themselves, and within a day or two the whole business of Dougal's life was being probed. Where was Miss Holland? asked the newspapers. They asked in vain. Wide-flung was the net of inquiry. Nothing, or practically nothing, was obtainable. If Miss Holland were alive she had completely disappeared from human ken. Earlier and grimmer suspicions began to re-assert themselves. The house at the Moat Farm was carefully watched. Nothing came of it. No thread of evidence could be obtained to support the terrible suspicion.

The newspapers took the matter up with vigour, and Pressmen flung themselves into the inquiry with an intensity which would have aroused the contemptuous admiration of Sherlock Holmes himself. It became the conviction of all

that Miss Holland had been done away with. All the while Dougal lay in prison awaiting the rehearing of the charge of forgery. Within him was caged the secret. He alone knew the whereabouts of Miss Holland, and knew whether she was alive or dead.

What were his thoughts during that time? He was a brave man, as I have said, but he must have had some terrible moments. Meanwhile the public was becoming excited about the affair. The detectives in possession of the farm had already begun to dig at random in the garden, in the outlying fields, and had dragged the moat. They found nothing. It was like searching for a needle in a haystack. If the body of Miss Holland had been buried it might have been buried in the middle of a field, it might have been buried within a quarter of a mile of the house, and yet not be found in a year of searching. There might be ploughed ground now over the body; well-established turf might be carpeting the surface of the grave. If body there were, what but a very unlikely chance could help the searchers to find it?

Every day the public read eagerly the newspapers to ascertain if the tragic discovery had been made. Down at the Moat Farm the detectives cut trenches in various directions, dug pits

at likely spots within a reasonable circumference of the house, and made excursions over the fields to find any suggestion of a disturbed surface. Nothing was discovered, and presently there was a dull expectancy and a feeling that if Miss Holland were dead her body was not to be found in the vicinity of the Moat Farm.

And Dougal—what of him? Charged with forgery only, a light enough offence in comparison with murder, he awaited within his cell the result of the strenuous search at the Moat Farm. Let it be said at once that there was a body; that he was a murderer. Subsequently this was known. But now, while he was in prison he was, for the time being, a safe man—safe, that is to say, against the last terrible charge to which an individual can be subjected. He alone knew where the body was concealed. He alone knew that through the back of the skull was a bullet hole caused by himself. And while the detectives went on strenuously with their seeking, while the world waited from day to day to learn what was eventually a horrible tale, Dougal was sitting in his cell, ignorant of what had been discovered or what was still unknown, expecting perhaps from hour to hour the tidings which should eventually lead him to the gallows, pursued meanwhile by the feverish hope that the

murder was too well hidden. Some years of prison life was the worst he had to look forward to on the forgery charge. That might be the most of his punishment. And how precious that punishment would be as a respite any one with a little imagination can realise. He waited with a tortured soul, and meanwhile he gave no sign.

I was down at the Moat Farm on the morning when the detectives found the body of Miss Holland. They had dug hither and thither, had tried various likely places, had probed the garden, and uncovered portions of the farmyard. From time to time they made a fresh survey of the area all round in an effort to discover the hidden place. And it was in one of these surveys that a line of young fruit-trees some sixty yards or so from the house, running out from a corner of the farmyard, caught the eyes of some of the police chiefs. Was it not possible that one of these trees, apparently planted a few years before, might have been put in as a blind over the grave of the dead woman? Quickly some of the trees were uprooted and a trench commenced. It was soon evident that the earth had been moved and was not virgin soil. Some hours of work took the detectives lower and lower in the trench, and presently a fragment of cloth was

drawn up by a shovel. Then all knew that the discovery was at hand.

I had gone back to London on the previous day for some purpose or other, and I was in the reporters' room in the morning when there was flashed over from Saffron Walden the bare statement that a trace of cloth had been found in the progress of the excavation that morning. There was a train down to Essex within twenty minutes, and Mr. Charles Hands and myself, in a cab, hurried to Liverpool Street Station to catch it. At Liverpool Street Station I had just time to wire to Audley End, the station at which we were to alight for the Moat Farm, to have a fast trap awaiting us. We spun along the miles between Audley End Station and the Moat Farm as hard as we could go. At the farm we found a group of detectives and police officials standing around a gaping hole. "She's found," said one of them quietly as we walked forward.

We went to the edge of the excavation and looked down. There was a human form beneath, still half embedded, and around it detectives were carefully digging away and trying to clear it from the encumbering clay. I remember the detail that struck me was the way the dark skirt was twisted. It looked as if some one had hastily pulled it round the woman's legs when the body was thrust

into the ground. In silence we watched the slow and careful exhumation. It was three or four years since the woman had been flung into this extemporised grave. Slowly an extemporised board was placed beneath the body. It was covered and raised to the surface, and then taken off to the little conservatory adjoining the farm-house, seventy or eighty yards away. There it was to rest until the clothing of the dead woman had been identified, for, of course, after a period of years it was impossible to recognise the features.

I think we were all impressed not so much by the sordid horror of the actual discovery as with the thought of the man in the cell to whom the announcement must come as a death warrant. Out of all that expanse of fields, orchard, farm-yard, lake, there was one fatal spot on which his thoughts and fears must have been centred. If the detectives should pass over that one spot, if they should fail in their wide expanse of search to let their eyes rest upon that one little place, he was a saved man. Surely he might hope for that? Without the discovery of the body it could not be said that Miss Holland was dead. She might be travelling abroad, she might be living quietly in some English country town, she might be concealing herself in some London suburb,

anxious to escape the unpleasant notoriety which would be hers if now she was found. Dougal must have yielded to all these thoughts and suppositions. He must have built for himself a foundation of probabilities. He must have told himself that fate would, indeed, be against him if the detectives should alight on that one fatal place beneath the fruit-trees.

It has to be remembered that Dougal was under remand, not for murder, but for forgery. Now he was to be brought face to face with the more terrible accusation. And it was in his reception of what was to all intents and purposes his death-blow that he showed his fibre. Murderer though he was, Dougal was an intensely brave man. Let me try to give an impression of him as I saw him. At the first glance he gave the idea of manliness, spoilt a second later by an indefinable suspicion of subtlety. And then, before a minute had elapsed, one would be puzzled by the recognition of power and influence. He looked what he was—a strongly-built man of the age he professed (fifty-five years), with broad shoulders, well-balanced head, regular, handsome features, and a little beard trimmed Vandyke fashion. Broad, shapely forehead, a striking, clear-cut Roman nose, a firm, full mouth, and remarkably clear and shining blue eyes told of

decision and resource. There was more than these. At times his face could be eloquent with a kind of womanly eloquence, and those clear blue eyes, so keen at one moment, could soften to a real, tender persuasion. In spite of these touches of softness there was something of bigness and strength about the man. He was quiet in manner, pleasant in speech, unobtrusive. Educated people, as well as ignorant people, felt his natural charm. I think it very likely that Dougal would have made a marvellous hypnotist. But under all this there was another expression not so pleasant. It was an expression for which it was hard to find a name—scarcely more than a shade in the eyes, a pucker in the forehead, and yet it gave a feeling that the man's thoughts were not in his face. Somehow that feeling, when one looked at Dougal, was objectionable.

This, then, was the man who, a few days after the discovery of the body of Miss Holland, was conveyed from Cambridge Gaol to his old home at the Moat Farm and in his own drawing-room charged with murdering her. In the room in which he had so often sat with her and conversed with her he received the news that his crime was known, and must from that instant have realised that he was a doomed man. Three minutes after that formal charge was made in

his drawing-room he was taken from the house across the farmyard to the barn opposite to attend the inquest. On his way he had to pass through a little group of hostile villagers, who at one time had touched their hats respectfully to "the Master of the Moat," but who were ready now to scream disgust and hate. With that new charge of murder ringing in his ears Dougal, guarded by warders, went by those people with swinging strides, with head erect. And I remember the cold penetrating eye with which he regarded those who watched his degradation. He was no mean prisoner. Handcuffed as he was, he looked still the strong, resourceful, confident man. He walked into the barn where the inquest was to be held, returning calmly and critically the gaze of the hundred curious eyes that were turned upon him. A little thing showed his personal self-possession. As he passed over the threshold, with his wrists still bound by the handcuffs, he turned and motioned to the warder that his hat must be removed as a sign of respect to the coroner. The warder hastily obeyed, and Dougal walked forward and took his seat at the coroner's table by the side of his solicitor.

Throughout the long sitting the court saw little of what was in the murderer's soul. There were some faint signs. Even a strong man like

Dougal could not but be affected by the awful position. When the handcuffs had been temporarily removed he drew his long white hand carefully over his face. The face was unmoved, but the delicate fingers were trembling. As the proceedings went on, the light seemed to die out of his eyes, and as he faced the witnesses his lids contracted, and at times one could see but little more than a slit between them, a slit of glittering brightness. Between these contracted lids one had glimpses of torture. Stung by pain into lightning-like brightness, sinking for an instant to dulness, and then flashing forth again, the eyes of the man told much. But these were but occasional revelations. For the most part he was dignified and composed, and when he left to go, and walked to the carriage provided by the police, his step was as brisk, his head as erect, and his face as unmoved, as when in the months before he had walked about the farm as owner.

The upshot of it all was that Dougal was condemned to death. Under sentence in prison he sunk to silence, but carried himself as a man without nerves, going through the ordinary exercises of eating and drinking and smoking, with the steady demeanour of a man who cannot be frightened. On the morning of July 14, when

he was to go to his death, he was awakened at six o'clock. He chose for breakfast an egg and bread and butter and tea, and he ate fairly well.

The story of the last hour is painful even for those who realise that Dougal was a cold-blooded murderer. Just before eight o'clock the High Sheriff led a little procession through two lines of saluting warders in Chelmsford prison to the condemned cell, a roomy apartment near the middle of the prison. The door was flung open, and Dougal was revealed to the little procession standing between warders, with a shaft of sunshine from the window of the cell falling upon him. The supreme moment was near at hand. One of the warders handed Dougal a tin pannikin of brandy, from which he drank deeply. He stood erect, and threw out his chest, so as to face the end without flinching. Only the nervous movement of his full lips and the working of his eyes told of his thoughts. He was pinioned by the hangman. It was but sixty feet to the place of execution. Dougal stepped out firmly with head erect and chest well out. The chaplain in his surplice walked ahead of him reciting the burial service. This is how a witness of the scene described the last two or three seconds—

"At this tense moment, with Billington's hand on the lever, and his assistant holding the loop of the rope, the chaplain leant forward to Dougal, a terrible, earnest figure, one hand holding the Prayer Book, the other nervously stretched forward to the sightless man. 'Dougal,' he said, in a thrilling voice, 'are you guilty or not guilty?' Dougal half turned his head in the direction of the voice, and said, in a clear and firm tone, 'Guilty.' At this second the lever was moved, the trap-doors flew under him with a noise which to the hearers seemed like a thunder-clap, and Dougal disappeared below."

CHAPTER III

THE THRILL OF EVAN ROBERTS

THAT strange, attractive country, Wales, always seems to me more foreign to an Englishman than some of the countries across the sea. It is a land of mountains, of legends, of song, and its people speak a weird, euphonious language, and are moved by emotions which we know not. Go down into the heart of Cardiganshire or Merionethshire, and you will find a happy, pastoral atmosphere, in which soft-tongued people carry on their daily intercourse in their native Welsh, learn English as a task, and refer to a visiting Englishman as a "Saznak" (Sassenach). The rushing rivers, the snow-capped mountains, the idyllic valleys have in the passage of centuries evolved a race which is as distinctive from the stolid Hampshire man or the keen, determined Northumbrian, as it is from peoples east of the North Sea. Nationality is a vivid, panting thing

in Wales. It is no mere cult, no affectation, no mere ambition. It lives. The people generally do not know why they are different from the English. They only know they are different.

The wave of religious enthusiasm which passed over Wales some nine years ago could not have arisen in England. The excitation was a racial symptom. There is no such fund of emotion in the neighbouring country over here, and that is why any attempted imitation of the revival in England would have seemed artificial and farcical.

It was during 1904 that England began to talk of a young Welshman named Evan Roberts, who was carrying the fiery cross of religion to mountain villages, and who was bringing practically the whole Welsh people to ecstasy. Englishmen laughed about the prominence given to the matter in the newspapers, declared that the preaching, and praying, and singing were but a temporary outburst which would pass in a week or two. As a matter of fact, six months later, the mountain villages of Wales were still white hot, and whole counties remained fire-swept.

It must not be thought that the influence of the revival was confined to the inside of the

chapels where nightly meetings took place. The chapel in the valley had worshippers from scattered cottages for miles along the mountain side, and all day they talked of the great topic, and at night you would have met them along the lonely roads, tramping through the darkness, the men together, the women together, the children together, as a rule in little bunches. They talked as they went along, for they were not ashamed of their new enjoyment in life.

What of this young man who had suddenly set a country in flames? I went down to Wales to do some sketches of him, and I had full opportunity to describe him as he actually appeared to me, either as a swindler, charlatan, or simple-minded street-corner sermon-shouter. I found Evan Roberts none of the things I have mentioned. I found him a stalwart, abstracted youth, crude, earnest, magnetic; and I discovered, moreover, that he had very wonderful powers of influencing gatherings of worshippers. He worked in their own medium, of course, and had the gift of rousing emotion in others. He was preaching in the Pontypridd district when I set out to see him first, and it was on a Sunday morning that I went up the valley some miles from Pontypridd, to a little village called

Abercynon, where he was to be on the platform of the local Calvinistic Methodist chapel.

About nine o'clock I reached Abercynon, and people were praying and singing in the chapel, not as the commencement of a day's service, but as a continuation of an all-night service—for at this time praying and singing went on in the chapels almost throughout the twenty-four hours. Evan Roberts was staying at the house of one of the elders of the church, and I went alone to call on him and see what he was like before the service began. I was taken into the little room where he was about to begin breakfast with two or three friends. Erect, clean-shaven, youthful-looking, with introspection in his eye, he threw one or two abrupt words at me by way of greeting. It was true he spoke English with difficulty, but I think his manner was also due to the fact that he was so absorbed in soul-saving thoughts, that newspaper correspondents and external matters generally were of not the slightest import to him. I was present during breakfast, in the course of which there was a broken conversation in Welsh which I did not understand. Evan Roberts said little. Once he paused, with knife and fork in his hand, his eyes bent vacantly on the wall opposite. "Seven yesterday," he said, "five the day before," and at each number he

knocked on the table with the handle of his knife. I learnt afterwards that he was citing the number of the converts he had made.

I left the party to go on ahead of them to the little chapel. The doors were open, and the building was crammed with men and women, mostly men. No one was on the platform, no one conducting the service, and the gathering was praying and singing spontaneously without leaders. I passed inside the chapel—a four-square whitewashed place, with a plain gallery; and it was to the gallery I mounted, and there squeezed myself in by the side of a local shopkeeper in order to witness the simple service. A sweet-voiced girl started a hymn in Welsh; and the people joined in and sang it with heartiness. As the last note dropped away, a middle-aged woman in mourning black, seated at the rear of the meeting, began to pray. She prayed, as did most of those at revival meetings, in a low voice. She prayed to herself, forgetful of the people around her, forgetful of everything save some great recent trouble in her life. All the other people were on their knees, with their faces buried in their hands. I think they were praying with her, and for her.

It was during the singing of the hymn, nearly an hour later, that two or three people

unostentatiously edged themselves into the chapel from the doorway, among them being Evan Roberts. He had his overcoat collar turned up to his ears, and his hands thrust into his pockets; and he walked sideways through the people in the middle of the chapel, shuffling along like a boy who has arrived late at school and is anxious to take his place without being noticed. He mounted the platform and soon began talking to the people in a curious, unoratorical way. He was like an argumentative child talking to other children, though his voice was low and pleasant all the time. Sometimes, he gave a pitiful, despairing little wail of appeal; but, otherwise, his tone did not rise.

A soft animation grew on him. I began to have a better picture. His age was twenty-six, but he looked like a boy of nineteen, with his pale, clear-cut face and dreamy blue eyes. Sometimes there was the trace of an appealing smile on his face, but it flitted as soon as it appeared—and he began again with that serious, musical, conversational appeal. Quietly, as he talked, I could see he was rousing excitement all over the gathering. Presently, one could hear a stifled sob from one knew not where; a pitying note of exclamation from a woman, and once in a way a deep Welsh word from some man. A tiny, faint

murmur began to make itself heard in the chapel —just an indication of suppressed feeling. All the while Evan Roberts paced up and down the platform, talking to the people like children. Of course, he spoke in Welsh, but even I, an Englishman, with no knowledge of the language, could feel the influence from him and the reactive influence of the emotion in the chapel. Those low, disjointed words, the sudden prayer of an old man, the line of a hymn bursting out interruptingly from two or three girls, all had an effect on one.

The murmuring excitement through the building increased. A good many faces were white. The shopkeeper who had been interpreting for me was unable to speak. Three seats along I saw a woman trembling. More than once Evan Roberts' discourse was broken by the interruption of hymn-singing, and he joined in, as though it were all part of the regular proceedings. He began his talk again afterwards.

Suddenly, he raised his hand above his head, and shouted something in a ringing voice.

"What is he saying?" I asked.

"He is telling all those who are saved to stand up," replied the man near me. A great portion of the audience were rising as the words were spoken, and Roberts sprang on to the seat in

front of the platform in order the better to see the people. Prayerful ejaculations, snatches of hymns, and incoherent, strained sounds came from all parts of the gathering. A hundred, I should think, remained in their places. Girls, who formed the choir just in front of the platform, made their way hurriedly among the seated people, and here and there I could see them bending over and apparently pleading with those who were not afraid to show their unconverted state.

Roberts had his head and shoulders thrust forward; his eyes were sunken. He began to speak to the people in an intense whisper. The sudden, tense emotion of the man was like a beacon. In a feverish whisper he implored his hearers to listen while there was time. He pleaded with them as he would have pleaded with infants. "Do not scoff at God," he said. One or two people rose to their feet.

"Diolch Iddo" ("God be praised") came in a tremendous chorus directly. Still there were a good many in the seats, and as Roberts' eyes fell upon them he wrung his hands in agony.

"Dewch Ato!" ("Come to Him!") he wailed. "Dewch Ato!" "Dewch Ato!" Great tears were running down his cheeks, and the intensity of the man was painful to see. All over the chapel

now women were crying, and in the gallery opposite to me a burly man of forty had his head buried in his hands on the rail in front of him, and was shaking with sobs. Roberts loudly asked for the names of converts. A man sprang up from his seat in the gallery and announced his name. Then from various parts of the hall arose the singing and the prayers. Names were thrown at Roberts. A red-haired man with a big book had mounted the platform and was taking down the names as fast as he could. Roberts' eyes were gleaming.

"Evan Edwards," he cried to the red-haired man with the book. "John Jones. John Jones with his two boys."

"Diolch Iddo!" "Diolch Iddo!" cried the gathering in ecstasy.

The four or five singing girls were here and there all over the hall, remaining by the side of men and women who were still in their seats, and, with faces thrust quite close, were appealing to them, and then praying for them. Sometimes they were successful and sometimes not. Suddenly Evan Roberts jumped from the platform on to the floor and made a dash to the middle of the congregation, and tried persuasion on a man who had not risen. He soon had him on his feet. There was a dominating, overpowering

influence in that slim figure in the black overcoat. Nothing could withstand him. He seized an obstinate greybeard by the hand, talked to him rapidly, gave a little smile, and the victory was won. He dashed upstairs to the gallery to the side of a middle-aged man, who had withstood the attacks of the preacher's lieutenants, prayed by his side for a minute, and then, with a jubilant gesture, announced his name to the man with the pen.

"Diolch Iddo!" "Diolch Iddo!" sang the gathering.

I saw Roberts several times after that, and always there was a reflection of that great power over the audience. I classed him then, as I class him now, as a wonderful man, but he was working among a wonderful people. Not the least remarkable of his achievements was the spirit he set afoot among those far afield who had never seen him.

Step with me across Wales from Glamorgan to the foot of Snowdon. I travelled to the mountain village of Nebo, where a young pupil-teacher preacher named Evan Jones had begun to obtain a measure of local fame as a preacher. In private Evan Jones was a pleasant-mannered, chatty young fellow of twenty, but on the chapel platform he was a changed man. When he fell

down to pray on the night that I was present he dropped behind a wooden desk, where his writhing could but be partly seen. Before I left the chapel I heard an old man pray piteously for his erring daughter, and I heard a young girl pray that God would take care of Evan, the pupil-teacher.

Come to another district, Arthog, a little village at the foot of Cader Idris. A woman it was there who had been fired with the preaching facility—a Mrs. Jones, a farmer's wife. For an hour, while others prayed and sang, she stood bareheaded, with her hands behind her back, swaying to and fro. She stood thus while a girl sang "Tell mother I'll be there," a crude revival hymn, which had a strange power with those Welsh people. When it was finished a black-haired youth of nineteen fell on his knees with a sob and prayed shrilly for help. "You may sing 'Tell mother I'll be there!'" he said, "but my father has just died. It is my father; not my mother." "Oh, God!" he screamed, "tell father I'll be there." An old man in the front row was laughing horribly. Tears were running down the face of a girl at my right. On the platform stood the silent, staring figure of the farmer's wife, and in her eyes a mysterious light told of inner communings.

CHAPTER IV

THE GHOSTS OF WALES

I DO not know that I can say that I have seen a real ghost; but I have at least seen something which may pass for a ghost, something the origin of which has never been explained satisfactorily to myself or to others who witnessed it. From the time when I wrote about the "Lights of Egryn" there has been a smile or a kindly silence when the matter has crept up; and yet I saw those lights as plainly as the hundreds of other people saw them on various occasions.

Before I come to the Lights of Egryn, however, I want to tell of another little ghostly experience in Wales. The local papers of South Wales gave a good deal of prominence in 1906 to the strange occurrences at a cottage in the occupation of a miner at the little mining town of Abertridwr, not far from Cardiff. It was stated that strange knockings were heard in the house, and that the

young miner who occupied it had been frightened nearly out of his wits, and that responsible people who had gone to the house had also heard the knockings—of which there was no ascertainable explanation. The details were so circumstantial that I went down to investigate the whole matter. I found Abertridwr very excited, and, indeed, not without cause.

The haunted residence was one of a line of small cottages, and when I arrived it was empty, because the young miner, unable to stand the strain of the nocturnal happenings, had, with his wife, found lodgings in another house. I was told as a preliminary that nothing of note occurred in the cottage except when this young man himself was present, and that persons who had been present during the manifestations while he was in the place had waited in vain for anything to happen when he was absent. The first thing I did was to seek out the man himself. I found a trembling, white-faced young fellow whose unnerved state was apparent at a glance. It was with difficulty that I coaxed him to say anything, and what I did extract was little more than "Yes" and "No." I tried to persuade him to come along to the haunted house that night and stay with me there in order that I might have the opportunity of hearing or seeing what took place. He

stepped away from me as if he had been stung. "Nothing will make me go back there again." I tried hard. It was quite without avail. I even offered to pay him if he would come and spend an hour with me there at midnight. He became angry at the idea.

From the young miner I went to the Rev. Gwilym Rees, a Church of England clergyman, who lived about a mile away. He was present at one of the ghostly demonstrations, in company with a dozen others, including the local police-sergeant and a police-constable, and I heard the following story.

The young miner, much against his will, was induced to go with the clergyman, two policemen, and others to the haunted house between the hour of midnight and two a.m. The place had been stripped of furniture with the exception of a chair in the back kitchen. The visitors were hardly inside the place before a distinct loud rapping was heard on the interior of the wall near them, and the house was immediately thoroughly searched from top to bottom. No trace of any other person was discovered. The party went into the kitchen. This is the narrative of the police-sergeant—

"He (the young miner) was taken over to near the fireplace and placed on the lap of a man, who held him tightly round the body. Suddenly, there

came two resounding knocks from the cupboard in the chimney recess a few feet from him. The blows seemed to come from the interior of the cupboard, and the unfastened doors were shaking. They were immediately flung open and the interior of the cupboard examined. It was quite empty."

"The blows," said the other policeman who was present, "were not mere taps. They were like the kicks of a horse."

The young miner was placed on the chair in the middle of the room, and a member of the company held his hands. Two minutes later there were three loud raps on the wooden bottom of the chair in which the miner was sitting. He had been in a state almost of collapse for some minutes, and he now fainted away.

This is the statement of the clergyman: "I went to the house because I had known him for some time, and he had come to me in distress about the matter. I was utterly sceptical. I came away feeling convinced that the sounds I had heard were not produced by human agency. The knocks were loud and resounding. We saw nothing to account for them at the moment we heard them, nor could an exhaustive search of the house throw any light on the matter."

I went to the haunted house on two or three nights, and stayed there until the early hours of

the morning, but no manifestation occurred during my presence. I left without personal evidence of the ghostly manifestation, except the statements made in all sincerity by persons who, without any predisposition to credulity on ghosts, had been convinced that there was something supernatural in what had occurred.

What I have narrated is the story of the ghost I did not see. Now let me give that of the "ghost" which I did see.

The Manchester papers in the beginning of 1905 contained reports of weird happenings on the coast near Barmouth, under the shadow of Cader Idris. This part of Wales, like many other parts, was under the revival influence, and you could feel the prevalent emotion in the ordinary everyday life, in the shops, in the little hotels, in the little post office, on the farms, among the roadside workers. Emotion was in the air. You went to any one of these districts as an Englishman, with a kind of smiling derisiveness, and you were there but a day or two before you were compelled, at any rate, to accept the mood of the people seriously and to regard the revival spirit as an extraordinary and substantial fact. That has to be taken into account in reading the story I am about to relate.

When strange stories of supernatural visions

began to emanate from the district of North Wales, of which I am writing, English people smiled tolerantly and said: "Well, well!" The story getting abroad was to the effect that a wave of religious enthusiasm was rolling over the district, that it was receiving its impulses largely from a simple farmer's wife, who, touched with inspiration, was bringing religious truths to the hearts of the people for miles round her home, and that as an accompaniment to the wonderful change in this woman, and the wonderful work she was accomplishing, heavenly lights of brightness and magnitude were appearing on the hillsides and in the sky in the part of the countryside where she was carrying on her ministrations. I dare say this looks at once stupid and fantastic. If it were put into fiction it would hardly be possible to give it a touch of reality. Yet, as a matter of fact, this was the situation as reported in paragraphs and occasional longer articles in the Manchester papers. At first in London we thought it was not worth while paying attention to these statements—they seemed so far-fetched and so obviously born of ecstasy. But presently there appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* a carefully-written article, signed by a correspondent who had made a special visit to the place, in which details were given of some of these manifestations.

It was coldly and clearly stated by the correspondent that he had seen these weird lights on an evening when the farmer's wife went out to preach at some outlying chapel. He described them with particularity, and to him it seemed that they kept pace with the trap in which she was driving along, and their vividness and continuity were described with obvious genuineness.

This to matter-of-fact, materialistic Fleet Street was, in common talk, a staggerer. It was impossible to think that the correspondent was wilfully writing what was not true; it was clearly impossible that in writing his story he had been deceived absolutely by things which had a perfectly natural explanation. What it all meant it was hard to say. There was only one thing for a live newspaper to do, and that was to send down a London correspondent to learn if he also could witness these strange visions, and, if he could, to try to find out what they arose from. It was on this mission that I left London for Barmouth, the nearest town of any size. With a feeling of disappointment, I ran against a correspondent from another paper, the *Daily Express*, when changing at a station on the way—I think it was Welshpool. He was bound on the same errand as myself, and I had been hoping that I was on the way to an exclusive story.

Only a few days later, however, I found myself very pleased that a rival newspaper man was present, because he was not far from me on the night I saw some strange things; and he was able to tell the public in his journal a somewhat similar story to my own. Why should I be glad? it may be asked. For this reason: That after I returned to London I was met with a smiling disbelief from colleagues and friends. All kinds of suggestions were made—that I had dined not wisely but too well; that I had been over-anxious to secure a sensational narrative, and had exaggerated trivialities; that I had whole-heartedly invented a fairy tale. It soothed me, therefore, to think that if I had been wholly off my balance, and had been deluded in a wholesale way, at least the influences were exercised simultaneously upon a rival who saw the same as I did and gave to the world very much the same facts as I did. All this by the way.

Running northward from Barmouth by the side of the sea, the main road passes along at the base of a range of hills, and some three or four miles on enters the village known as Egryn, and then proceeds a mile or two further into the tiny grey town of Duffryn. That, in a sentence, is the lay of the country. It was Egryn which was the centre of the manifestations, and it was Egryn

where lived Mrs. Jones, the farmer's wife, who was believed to be the objective round which the manifestations centred.

There were perhaps a dozen or so of houses in Egryn, and they were not grouped together, but were scattered over the countryside—a farm-house here, a labourer's cottage here and there, and at a point on the roadside was the tiny Calvinistic Methodist chapel, removed from any habitation. Mrs. Jones worshipped within it, and the neighbourhood of the chapel was one of the places where the lights were frequently seen. My first thought on getting to Barmouth was to see if it were possible for these mysterious lights to arise from natural causes; to find out if they were "will-o'-the-wisps" or some kind of electric phenomena. I disposed of the first suggestion at once, for I found nothing in the configuration of the country to lead me to suppose that the lights resulted from marshy gases or similar influences.

As you went north along the road from Barmouth the hills sloped up from the right, and on the left were fields separating the road from the sea. At Egryn the margin between road and sea increased considerably, but there was nothing in the character of the intervening land to lead to an explanation of the strange lights,

and, indeed, this supposition was disposed of by the fact that the lights were seen generally on the uplands; "in the sky" was a frequent description of their location. On the sloping fields leading towards the steeper hillsides, there was nothing to lead to the discovery of the origin of the lights. The hills above the fields and meadows were barren of cultivation, and the desolate stretches of loose stony material were without so much as a cottage for miles, without even a shepherd's hut. There were no trees nor any means of concealment for possible organisers of a great practical joke. I covered the ground pretty thoroughly and could find nothing to help me as to the cause of the lights.

The next step was to collect evidence from people who were not likely to be carried away by their emotions, and I quickly came upon a surprising state of things. I went to a local tradesman in Barmouth, to working people, and to ministers of religion. From nearly all of them I received the same kind of evidence about the lights. It seems that the lights varied a good deal—varied in number though not very much in appearance. They were globular, bright lights which appeared suddenly high up away from the ground, sometimes in groups of twos and threes or more, sometimes singly, and they lasted from periods

of seconds to periods extending over an hour. They were described as sometimes being stationary half-way up the hillside, sometimes as moving along the hillside with the trap of Mrs. Jones as she drove to service (though there was not such overwhelming evidence of this as of the simple appearance of the lights).

The thing that impressed me most was the matter-of-fact and obviously sincere assertions of the different witnesses. Most of them took the appearance of the lights as something not calling for any great wonderment or, indeed, for more than passing comment. That Heaven should take upon itself to give some outward and visible sign of its approval of the prevalent enthusiasm was the most natural thing in the world. That was the general spirit. I remember going to a big chapel at Duffryn, the minister of which was a level-headed man who had a night or two before my arrival seen the lights. The service was proceeding when I arrived, but in response to a message to the platform, the minister came down and had a chat with me about the matter, and his statement was clear. "I saw these lights," he said, "to the number of seven. They appeared to be in the sky."

My journalistic colleague and rival had made somewhat similar inquiries to my own in other

directions, and his general conclusions were in consonance with my own, and we arranged to join forces at night in order to watch for the lights. It was during the afternoon before our first vigil that I made a journey on my own account to see Mrs. Jones, the reputed origin of all the strange happenings. She lived in a lone farmhouse at Egryn, between the sea and the hills.

I first saw Mrs. Jones's brother, a quiet-spoken Welshman, who told me that the lights were generally visible on the occasions when his sister went forth to preach. I learnt, too, how Mrs. Jones had taken no part at all in public speaking, but had been a reserved, home-loving woman, reticent of speech, only a few months before. Her influence over audiences, her confidence and power on the platform, had come suddenly.

Mrs. Mary Jones I found a simple-mannered country woman of thirty-five, her hair touched with grey. She was absolutely without self-consciousness, and had a quiet, easy mien. Her tone was deep and soft, but her brown eyes were alive with a strange light. I think she had natural powers of personality. She spoke to me quite freely about the strange lights. She did not associate them particularly with herself,

she said, although it was true that they had been seen during the time she was on her way to chapel. She added, with a low-voiced intensity, she knew they were Heaven-sent, and that they were connected with the revival.

For two nights, on Thursday and Friday, my fellow-journalist and I paced the miles between Barmouth and Duffryn from Egryn, along at the foot of the hills, in the hope of seeing the lights. We saw nothing. We were particularly disappointed, because Mrs. Jones, on the second of the two nights, was out preaching at a village some two miles away, and it was on such occasions, we had been told, that the lights appeared. Saturday night came, and we went out for our third watch. Truth to tell, we had little expectation, because our previous experiences had left us with the increasing impression that in some miraculous way the whole population had deluded itself.

It has to be remembered that in walking from Barmouth the first place to be encountered was Egryn, and after that, some distance on, Duffryn. My friend and I had walked to Egryn at about seven o'clock, and had then made our way on to Duffryn, keeping our eyes on the black hillsides meanwhile. We saw nothing. Somewhere between half-past seven and eight

o'clock we started to walk back from Duffryn in the Barmouth direction. We strolled along, occasionally stopping and leaning over the breast-high walls which served in the place of hedges upon the roadside, looking out on to the blackness of the hillsides, and making our surmises as to the origin of the whole affair. Strolling along towards Egryn, he dropped a little way behind me—perhaps as much as fifty yards.

A mile ahead, the situation of the little Egryn chapel was shown by its three lighted windows, evidence that service was going on within. That was the only touch of light in the miles of countryside.

I remember sitting down on a big boulder on the side of the road waiting for my friend to come up, and sitting there, I was idly looking towards Egryn, when suddenly I saw what appeared to be a ball of fire above the roof of the distant chapel. It came from nowhere and sprang into existence instantly. It had a steady, intense yellow brilliance, and did not move. I whipped out my watch, for I wanted to be exact in any description of what I saw, and I found the time to be twenty minutes past eight. My friend came hurrying up with a shout, and we stood together trying to imagine that the light was easy of explanation. A labouring

man was hastening to us from a hundred yards behind, and I said to him: "Do you see that?" pointing to the light, and he replied, excitedly: "Yes, yes, above the chapel. The great light."

The three of us stood and watched the light. It seemed to me to be about twice the height of the chapel—say fifty feet—and it stood out with electric vividness against the hills behind. We were, it should be remembered, about a mile away. Suddenly it disappeared, having lasted a minute and a half. With my journalistic colleague I remained leaning over the wayside wall, waiting for further developments, the countryman leaving us and making his way on alone. Again the chapel windows were the only lights in all the countryside. The minutes crept on, and it was about twenty-five minutes to nine before we saw anything else. Then it was that two new lights burst forth over the chapel like the one before, but this time considerably higher in the air. They looked to be about a hundred feet apart, and I guessed them to be about the same distance above the roof of the chapel. They shone out brilliantly and steadily for a space of thirty seconds, and then they both began to flicker like defective arc lamps. They were flickering like that while one

could count ten. Then they became stationary again. From where we were they looked like large and brilliant motor-car lamps. They disappeared within a couple of seconds of each other, having lasted about six minutes.

We started off quickly in the direction of the chapel to find out what we could. The lights might have been described as appearing in the air above the chapel, although in view of the fact that they showed up against the dark background of the hill it was possible for them to have been placed on the hillside itself. The mental impression, however—and I carefully noted the fact at the time—was that they were in the air and not on the hills. Breathlessly we discussed the matter as we hurried on towards the chapel, and all kinds of guesses were pût forward only to be thrown down again immediately. The chapel door was fastened, and I knocked. An elderly man came to the door.

"There have been some lights appearing above the chapel," I said. "Do you know anything about them?"

"No," he said soberly, "but they often appear when we are holding service here."

For nearly two hours afterwards we paced up and down the road looking for fresh demonstrations, but we saw none; and it was just before

half-past ten that we decided to give up the vigil for the night. We had passed Egryn Chapel and were well on the way to Barmouth at about a quarter to eleven. We were walking along, chatting together, when we suddenly saw on the hillside on our right a flash. Immediately we realised that one of the lights was before us again. It was about five hundred feet from where we stood, and shone out with an intense yellow brightness. A bulb of light about six inches in diameter, is the best way to describe it. To look at it was tiring to the eyes.

Hurrying to the stone wall at the side of the road, we climbed over, and began to run across the intervening field towards the light. We had not covered a score of yards before it disappeared, and there was not a sound anywhere throughout the night except the low gurgling of the sea some few hundreds of yards on the other side of the road behind us. We went up the hillside over the intervening meadow and fields to the spot near about where we imagined the light to have been located. We found nothing but the loose shale on the hillside—no sign of a human being, no available place of concealment, and nothing in the shape of a dwelling near by.

That, then, is what I saw at Egryn. There has been no explanation of it. The journal which

I represented sent down, with characteristic enterprise, highly-equipped scientific experts to explore the country, to test the hills for electricity, and to use whatever ingenuity was possible to find out the secret. They did not find it out. They came back with smiling incredulity at my story. The story remains for what it is worth. All that I can say is that I am not a Welshman, and that I was not moved by any of the revival enthusiasm of the district, and that I certainly saw the lights I have described.

CHAPTER V

THE GIRLS FROM OHIO

ONE bright Friday morning in June, 1907, the news editor, in studying the morning papers for fresh ideas, came across an announcement that twenty-four girls were on their way to this country for a holiday visit of inspection as a kind of prize for popularity. They were from Ohio. A newspaper in the capital there, Columbus, had instituted a contest by which the readers of the journal were invited to vote for the girls they considered most attractive, and the twenty-four girls who were at the top of the poll were given a seven weeks' tour of Europe, commencing with ten days in Great Britain.

They had never been in this country before, these girls. A good many of them worked for their living in teaching, secretarial occupations, and so on. One, a girl of nineteen, was still at college, while others were at home with their parents concerned more with domestic life than

with outside matters. Vivacious, expectant, determined to cram experience into every minute of their European visit, they constituted a smiling and excited group, who might stir even the most experienced of London reporters.

They were due to arrive at Glasgow on Sunday afternoon. When I set forth to meet them from London on Saturday they were no doubt excitedly talking together on the steamer about the land which they were approaching. My duty was to meet them at Glasgow when they landed, to describe them, to find out what were their impressions of this country, and thenceforward to sketch lightly their adventures during their stay here. At St. Pancras Station I found, bent on a similar errand to myself, another journalist, Mr. George Milligan, of the *Morning Leader*, and we made the journey to the North together. Fixing ourselves up at St. Enoch's Hotel, Glasgow, for the night, we went down to Greenock, half an hour's journey, in the morning to meet the incoming liner. We saw the girls leaving the big ship for the tender, and we watched them pass ashore to a spot near the Customs House, and from a distance of a hundred yards or so listened to their laughter and talk as they came to land. Penned off from the landing stage, we pressed

forward past the officials, leaving them, I fear, with the false impression that we were relatives or friends of the incoming girls, and we shook hands with the elderly man, an American Colonel, who was in charge of them, hurried into the Customs House with the excited group of girls, and proceeded to help them with their "grips" and their satchels. They did not quite know who we were, but they took it for granted we were friends. There was really neither time nor opportunity to tell them we were newspaper men, because they were simply bubbling with joy at landing and at the thousand little cares which beset the new traveller.

We got into a compartment with eight of them, and during the half-hour's journey to Glasgow secured quite enough from their lively talk and comment to provide us with the half-column of matter which we were to telegraph later in the day. I had on my right a dainty girl of nineteen, and opposite was a tall, clear-eyed girl from a country district, who lacked none of the self-possession and none of the keenness of the city girl. Rapturous was the feeling of all at being on land again. The country girl was well backed up by a girl bookkeeper from a city firm. "Say, girls, there's a cow," said the former in dramatic tones, as she looked out of the window, and there

was immediately a chorus of joy. "Houses with chimney pots!" said another, and I learned for the first time that chimney pots are not common in America. Their delighted amazement on approaching Glasgow to see tramcars with passengers on top of them was rather bewildering. There were no tops to the cars in America. "Well, now, that's real cute," they said, "saving every bit of space like that. And they say you're slow here." It was a week later in London, when the girls had become accustomed to mounting to the top of omnibuses and trams, that the country girl said reflectively one day after surveying the agile way in which her friends had learned to climb the steps to the roof of the vehicles, "Say, girls, we'll be able to walk straight up apple trees when we get home."

At Glasgow, when we alighted from the train, Mr. Milligan and I seized as many of the belongings of the girls as we could carry to help them along. But what were two among so many? Porters had to be requisitioned. Then there was not enough. A little brunette from Illinois put her "grip" on the platform, deliberately sat on it, surveyed the situation, and said emphatically and plainly, "Girls, what I want is a man." She was extremely pretty.

We saw them into the various vehicles which

took them off to their hotel, and made arrangements with the old Colonel in charge of them to go along that evening and fix up with him about accompanying the party on their travels. What happened during our separation of the afternoon and early evening I cannot say, but it is pretty certain that reflection came to the Colonel as to the advisability of having two newspaper men with the group throughout their travels. American newspaper men were probably in his mind. He may have feared that we should make fun in our respective newspapers of the ladies under his charge. Perhaps he consulted them. I rather think he did. At any rate his decision was made when Mr. Milligan and myself called upon him at the hotel about eight o'clock in the evening. We expected to be received with open arms. We were met with a chilliness which amounted to frigidity.

"I have been talking to the ladies," said the Colonel, "and we have come to the conclusion that we do not want any newspaper men with us on this trip." A little staggered, we asked the reason.

"The ladies would feel handicapped with the presence of reporters," we were told. I pressed the Colonel. He was obdurate. I pointed out our good intentions and showed how it was not

our practice to write ill-naturedly or offensively. I endeavoured to demonstrate how, since the party were strangers, we might even be of some personal assistance in this, their first visit of inspection to our country. But nothing that I could say on our behalf would move the Colonel and the situation became a little difficult.

"Very well," I said, "we have to write a daily story about your party, and, of course, we shall do it. It would have been helpful to us to have been actually with you in your travels. But if we cannot be with you we can be behind you."

"That is for you to decide," said the Colonel.

"When you take train we shall take train," I said. "When you go on a boat we shall go on a boat. When you drive to places we shall take a trap behind you. It would for us have been far pleasanter to have been with you."

"I am sorry," said the immovable Colonel.

We left him, defiance in the air; but as we were coming out of the hotel we were met by a courier from Messrs. Cook and Son's, who had arrived a few minutes before to give assistance to the American party, and he stopped us with a friendly salutation. We left with the impression that he would help us.

The next morning at eight o'clock outside the hotel from which the girls were to start we

awaited their coming forth. They emerged, very different from the girls we had seen the day before, filled with happy joy and good-humoured vivacity. Proper and dignified were they. The coldest inclination of their heads was their salutation. We bowed. They drove off to a station, whither we followed in a cab. On the platform there was icy silence between our two selves and the girls. They were bound for a trip through the Trossachs, and we, of course, were going through the Trossachs, too, prepared for adventure, but determined to be amiable whenever the chance arose, for we had all the confidence which rises in the breasts of young men connected with the *Daily Mail* and the *Morning Leader*. It was a silent, almost a disdainful, railway journey. They went on to a steamer at Loch Katrine, and we also went on to the steamer. The beautiful scenery, the beautiful sunshine, the exhilarating charm of it all ought to have softened the hearts of these young ladies, but they were of sterner stuff—for at least twenty minutes.

We found out the steward, and we bought up packets of picture postcards from him, and we then divided ourselves up and each took a section of the girls, avoiding as far as we could the eye of the Colonel for a while. Respectfully and seriously we presented picture postcards to the

dignified damsels. One or two of them received them sternly. By our respectful attitude we made it impossible for them to refuse absolutely, but there were some who could no longer stand the strain of seriousness. They had to laugh, and they did so. Albeit they were not altogether thawed.

The critical moment was, however, approaching. On landing we had to have a drive of twelve miles through the Trossachs, and two char-à-bancs were in waiting to take the party. Alas! this was a contingency for which we had not provided, and our boast the night before that we would follow the party wherever they went already seemed foolish. The girls quickly filled the two vehicles. We were trying to devise expedients to meet the emergency, but as there was only a minute to spare defeat seemed certain, when unexpectedly help came along. Cook's courier had been watching our exertions with very human interest, and he had held himself in reserve till he was really wanted. He rose to the occasion nobly. The char-à-bancs were both crowded. The Colonel was in one vehicle, and the courier was about to mount to the other, so that a start might be made, when as he was about to put his foot on the step he pretended suddenly to see us standing there.

"Surely," he said, "you two gentlemen are coming also."

"It is difficult——" began Mr. Milligan.

"One up into one and one up into the other," he said, quickly, with a wave of his hand towards the two conveyances, and before we realised what we were doing we were scrambling up the sides into the two char-à-bancs.

I shall never forget that twelve miles' ride—the stiffness at the start, the growing cordiality in the midst of a steady downpour of rain and peals of thunder, the happy comradeship in which we alighted after it, preparatory to taking the train to Stirling. Something like friendliness had been secured, and when we reached Stirling we had the privilege of dining with the party. We went round Stirling that evening with groups of the girls. Next day we were on our way to Edinburgh, and the position may be summarised by the statement that Mr. Milligan and I were conducting some of the visitors round to the more interesting parts of Edinburgh by ourselves, showing them the fascinating city which we, as mere Sassenachs, had long since known and loved. The girls were particularly interested in the cells of the castle used for the old French prisoners, and which were made famous in later years by Stevenson in his novel, "St. Ives." The hungry interest of them all, their

instant appreciation of old memories and points of beauty and of romantic associations made it a delight to be with them. Their comments, although enthusiastic, were informed with judgment —a sign of reading. Rarely have I known a more delightful time than the stay in Edinburgh.

The lighter side was not missing. I remember how at Holyrood a stalwart sentry in kilts attracted the attention of one of the girls with a Kodak. He strode up and down the front of the entrance with the stern and dignified mien of one who looked on trippers—American and otherwise—from a height of lofty and dignified seclusion. Grimness as well as dignity was in the carriage of his head and in his steady march. He was the embodiment of British pride and Scottish reticence. A fine figure of a man he was, too. The girl with the Kodak could not very well focus him as he was walking. He ignored camera and girl alike, and though she endeavoured to get him as he turned each time at the end of his patrol the result was not satisfactory. Finally she was driven to desperate courses. She walked a little nearer to him, still adjusting her camera, and as he once more went by the line of sight she said: "Say, man, will you hold still a minute, and let's get a picture?"

He paused not, he looked not, he marched

on. Colour flamed high over his gaunt cheek-bones. To have had his thoughts would have been interesting, indeed, but alas! they were not revealed.

"All the same, I think I have got him," said the American girl as she folded up her Kodak. The Highlander heard, but paid no attention. And then the American girls went in to see one of the rooms made famous by Mary, Queen of Scots.

From Scotland we travelled south, and by the time we were over the border I was one of the family. At Warwick, on a bright June night, six of the girls waltzed merrily in a country lane like children, and I fancy now I can hear the merry cry of one of the party: "Say, girls, did we come across the Atlantic for this?"

We saw the beauties of Stratford-on-Avon, and I was present at Shakespeare's house when one of the girls with her scissors dug up a splinter from the floor as a memento for Ohio. It was at Stratford-on-Avon, too, that two of them made a descent on the door of Miss Marie Corelli, and tried to obtain an interview, without, I am sorry to say, any success. Many places we went to in the next few days, and finally we landed in London. Within twelve hours the girls rapturously entitled it "A real dandy city." Its historical

associations went parallel with its thousand novelties of everyday life to these girls from the middle of America. Never was a human party so avid of understanding and, despite their touch of genial criticism, so full of delighted appreciation. They loved the London policeman, the courtesy of the tram conductors tickled them, the quickly-moving crowds in Cheapside and the Strand made them think less of the wonders of New York. They still were surprised at the pots on the chimneys; were surprised, too, with the fact that so many of the men in London carried walking-sticks; and were surprised at the general alertness of a population supposed to be effete.

It was intensely difficult to know these girls without liking them very much. I certainly was not proof against them. I have met countless attractive men and women in my years of work as a journalist, but I have never met people whose departure filled me with so much regret. On the day they sailed for the Continent I was—for a journalist—very much depressed. For the small courtesies which I as a fellow-passenger had been enabled to render them they were overflowing with gratitude—disproportionate gratitude. All kinds of happy messages came to me from Holland, where they disembarked, and generous words continued to arrive from various parts of Europe

which they visited. Five weeks later they arrived at Paris on their way up to Boulogne to embark for home. They were to leave Paris at about nine o'clock on the Saturday morning, and by travelling all night on Friday from London I was able to reach them by breakfast-time at the hotel in Paris before they left. It was a very happy reunion. On leaving for Boulogne I got into a compartment with eight or nine of them, and the Colonel in charge made a bee-line for the compartment also. The girls were having no nonsense, however, for they seized the inside handle of the door and said, "No, you don't, Colonel; not on this journey. You get another compartment." He did.

At Boulogne I went out on the tender with them to the liner, and they seized my kitbag in the vain endeavour to kidnap me for the journey across, and when I discovered my bag they pointed out what a good newspaper story it would make to say, on arrival at the other side, I had been seized and held captive by a group of American girls. I had no courage. I went off on the tender, and they hung over the side of the liner waving farewells. And when the steamer had disappeared from sight out at sea I felt that I had seen the last of my fascinating new friends. I had not.

The life of a journalist is filled with strange and happy chances. Exactly two months after the

experiences I have related, I was sent to America for the *Daily Mail*, primarily to make a trip on the first voyage of the *Lusitania*, and, secondly, to make my way to Canada to write some articles about Ontario, its lumber industry, and some new silver mines which had been discovered up there. The notice was short, and I had no time to correspond with the Ohio ladies, but directly I arrived in New York I sent a line to two of them, saying I was in their country, although nearly a thousand miles east of them, that I waved my hand in their direction, and that I was proceeding to Toronto, where I hoped to hear from them before leaving the Continent. Some of the other incidents of my brief stay in Canada I will relate a little later, and I pass over visits to copper mines, iron mines, lumber camps, cobalt and silver mines, to the day I returned to Toronto after a stay up country. At Toronto I found, in response from Ohio, a number of very cordial invitations to go down to Columbus, if only for a stay of a few hours. Columbus was a very long way south, and when I reached it I should be some eighteen hours west of New York. But my memories of the girls were such that the journey did not stop me, and I stole four days off, wired to Columbus my intention, and started off to see my friends. I remember getting to Buffalo about midnight, and then having to travel throughout

the night. I was due to reach Columbus between seven and eight o'clock, but it was more than an hour later than that when I arrived at the big station in the middle of the town. Some of the ladies were there to meet me, and they were just as warm and friendly and natural as they had been in England. Of all the conversation that was crammed into those first ten minutes on the platform I can remember but very little. One thing I do remember. They thrust into my hands a copy of the local newspaper issued some three days before, in which there appeared a flattering but inaccurate statement about myself and my visit to America and to my intended visit to Columbus. With true American frankness, the article hinted at a romantic mission in my journey. I laughed, and so did the ladies. They then produced that morning's daily paper, and I found that matters had gone a little farther. My immediate arrival was heralded with similar inaccurate descriptions of myself and my work and my purpose, but they were warmed up now. The name of the lady was indicated, and the article proceeded in this way: "We have interviewed Miss ——, but she will say nothing on the matter, but we have since interviewed her uncle, Mr. ——, who lives at 331, —— Street. He says: 'Yes, we have often heard my niece speak of Mr. Dilnot, and though nothing definite is

arranged, we expect a formal announcement shortly.'"

This was my first real introduction to the personal side of American journalism. I felt a little perturbed about it, not on my own account, but because of the inconvenience and annoyance it would cause to the lady it named. I had no time, however, for regrets, or, indeed, thoughts about the newspaper announcement, because the ladies proceeded to take me down from the station to the Chittenden Hotel, where accommodation had been reserved for me. Before they handed me over to the hotel manager they told me they were communicating with all the girls within reach of the city, and were getting up a little dinner that very night, because they had not known how long I intended to stay. In the evening I was to call at the house of one of the ladies, where there would be a little informal reception of two or three of my lady acquaintances. I thanked them for their kindness, and went upstairs to my room and prepared, after a bath, to have an hour or two's sleep, much wanted after three nights spent in the train. I did not know American ways. I was hardly in my room before there came a knock, the door opened, and in walked a clean-shaven young man who, with smiling briskness, said: "Good morning, Mr. Dilnot. I am from

the *Columbus Citizen.* Just called in to welcome you, and to ask you for your impressions of our city." I put him in a chair and gave him a cigarette. Within five minutes there were four newspaper men present. I had interviewed scores, if not hundreds of people on my own account, but never before up to this time had I been the interviewee, and I explained myself to this effect. They laughed and took it down. And then I made a personal appeal to them. I told them of the statement in the paper that morning about myself and the lady, assured them that there was no truth in it, begged them to withdraw it for her sake, and to state that far from being in love with one of them, I was in love with all the twenty-four. This was carefully reproduced in the evening edition that day.

How I got through the hospitality from that hour onward I do not quite know. The manager of the *Columbus Dispatch* took me across to the office, introduced me to every member of the staff from the proprietor downwards, and proceeded to make arrangements with delightful dash and comprehension. "I shall be taking you to lunch at the Ohio Club, because I want to introduce you to the Attorney-General and a few other people. Then this afternoon I want to take you to the races outside the town. This evening the girls have got up this little dinner for you, and, after the dinner,

I want to take you along to the theatre." It was delightful, but overpowering. Ungracious as it seemed, I had to plead fatigue and ask to be allowed off for the afternoon. And in their kindness they agreed. So I went to the Ohio Club to lunch, returned to my hotel, and tried to get a little rest. But there is a telephone in every room in American hotels.

Tea-time came, and more happy meetings at the house of my principal hostess, and dinner was upon me before there was time to turn round. One of the smaller dining-rooms in the Chittenden Hotel had been secured for the occasion and charming were the arrangements. One end was draped with Union Jacks, the other with Stars and Stripes, and the long table was decorated with English red roses. The hotel orchestra had been transplanted for the occasion to the proximity of the room, and we went in to dinner to the strains of "God Save the King," and throughout the dinner listened to British airs. A dozen or more of the girls were present, and it was a very happy and interesting evening. Later on, when the time came to say good-bye for the night, I said, jokingly, "Well, there are so many of you that I can't offer to see you all home." The immediate and emphatic reply was, "Well, see as many of us home as you can." So I saw five of them home. I was back in

bed at half-past one. That was the kind of time I had in Columbus.

"We have determined," said the editor of the *Columbus Dispatch*, "that you shall have no meal alone while you are in this place." They took me around in a car to all the clubs; they gave me all the famous American drinks, they introduced me to all kinds of interesting people. Here is an example of the kind of thing. I went with four of the ladies one morning to do a little shopping at a big general store owned by Messrs. Dunn, Taft, and Co. Mr. Taft was a cousin of the President of the United States. He came up while we were in the shop and spoke to the ladies, and was introduced. He said, "Ah, this is the Englishman they are talking about, is it? Come right up and have some lunch with me."

"Well," I said, "I don't think I can, because I am engaged with these ladies."

"Of course, the ladies must come up to lunch, too," said Mr. Taft. And so the girls with myself were swept upstairs to a dining-room, where we were entertained in invigorating fashion.

One story I must give that I heard from the editor of the *Columbus Dispatch*. I was standing with him on the first floor of the editorial room looking down on to the busy main street of Columbus, discussing newspaper matters in

general. I said, "You have got two very fine daily papers here, and evening papers as well; why not a successful Sunday paper?"

"We had two good Sunday papers up till about a year ago," he said. "They were going very well. Neither of them exists now. The editors conducted a sort of newspaper warfare against each other in their columns, and their remarks certainly equalled the rival editors in 'Pickwick Papers.' They spared each other not at all, so reckless were their attacks. I think they hated each other. Matters came to such a pitch that when they met one day down here in the street one editor drew a revolver and shot the other editor dead. The bullet passed through the editor and killed a second person behind. That was how the two papers came to a standstill."

I expressed my horror.

"Oh," he said, with a grave shake of the head, "of course, the chap didn't escape. A man who does that kind of thing here don't get off. He got a year's imprisonment."

There was no waste of time in hospitality, and I was entertained to dinner by the *Columbus Dispatch* staff at eight o'clock on the Saturday evening in spite of the fact that I was due to leave for New York at midnight. I slept nearly the whole of that eighteen hours' railway journey.

My visit to Ohio will always remain one of the happiest memories of my life. Kindness did not cease with my departure. When I left Boston and embarked on the *Saxonia* for home I found there a score of individual messages, picture postcards, letters, and verses: all with happy, cordial wishes. For the first and, perhaps, the only time in my life there flashed through me the reflection that monogamy might, after all, be a mistake. Sometimes even now I get a letter from one or other of my girl friends. It is good to see the Ohio postmark.

CHAPTER VI

NIAGARA AND THE SILVER MINES

WITH a score of expectant thoughts chasing each other, I alighted at Niagara Station one Saturday morning, and drove towards the Niagara River for my first visit to the Falls. A busy American street leads to the bridge which crosses the river a few hundred yards below the Falls, where the river is about as wide as the Thames at London Bridge. On one side is American territory, on the other Canadian territory. I was bound for a hotel on the Canadian side, and thus had to cross the bridge, which gave, as it had given hundreds of thousands before me, the first glimpse of the Falls of Niagara. The Falls are on the left as you cross the bridge, and the river swirling exactly beneath develops into narrow rapids a little farther down.

As to the Falls, my first impression, like that of many others, was one of disappointment at their size, for I had expected to see something far more tremendous. I would not have admitted then for

worlds that I was disappointed, but, nevertheless, there was a feeling that imagination had tricked me, and that the great cascade was less than the fancied picture. It took a dozen hours for this impression to go off, and then for the next two days there was a sort of process of realisation, and within three days the immensity and majesty of the waters began to have their effect.

The bed of the River Niagara curves round almost at right angles, and at one part in the curve it suddenly drops over a precipice to a depth of 158 feet. There you have the Falls. Go along the river bank and get as near as may be to the actual drop, and if you have any imagination you will be thrilled, and perhaps frightened, not at the thunderous fall of the water into the chasm below, but at that slow, awful, unalterable curve over the edge of the precipice. The curve is silent. At the apex of the fall the thickness of it is twenty feet. Its power oppresses you. Not the great fall of the water, not those murderous rapids below the bridge, where Captain Webb met his fate, not even the big swirling whirlpool lower down, leaves the impression that does the big silent curve.

I got an early glimpse of New World attitude of thought during my few days' stay at the Falls. On the one side of the river is the American city, on the other the Canadian town, and on the second

evening a Canadian member of Parliament took me for a stroll round the American side, and showed me street scenes, the shops, and a few of the interesting types. As we were making our way back towards the river he took me into a saloon.

"There is one place," he said, "I want you to see before we cross the bridge, and that is just by the riverside. It is called 'The Red House.' It is a well-known saloon, where a good many people congregate." I said "All right," and emptied my glass preparatory to setting forth, but the proprietor of the saloon, a friendly sort of man, who had listened to our conversation, leaned forward over the bar and said in a confidential undertone to my companion, "I shouldn't go in to-night, if I were you. A man was shot in there an hour ago, and the fuss isn't over yet."

So we did not go into "The Red House."

One of the most interesting things I saw in my travels was the mining town of Cobalt, which had sprung up in the midst of an Ontario forest through the discovery of silver there. This hilly little clearing, ringed with the forest, a centre of man's activity, brought a sudden reality to Bret Harte's romances and descriptions. It was at once crude and picturesque and business-like.

Only a few years ago the cutting of trees and the transport of them was, apart from hunting,

the only occupation that brought men to visit this district. It is related that on the spot where Cobalt stands lumbermen were at work constructing a track for timber, and that two of the men quarrelled about something or other, and fell upon each other with murderous blows. The combatants wrestled free, and then one of them got hold of an axe and hurled it at the other man. The axe missed its mark and struck a boulder, splitting it in half. In the middle of the boulder appeared a brilliant white streak. That streak was silver. The silver mines of Cobalt had been discovered.

At this time the dwellings at the place consisted of four small log huts used by the lumbermen, but when I visited it the place had grown to a city of five thousand people, with streets and shops, hotels, and an opera house. Day by day men were feverishly at work within a radius of many miles. In a few mines silver had occasionally been stripped from the rock like thick paper, and in other mines the rock, on account of the silver in it, could not be broken with a hammer, and would only bend. With these facts before me I saw hundreds of men, who were working terribly hard on blank claims, which would probably never produce an ounce of precious metal; hundreds of the other men were scouring desolate woods and

hollows in other directions, out of touch with civilisation, hoping for the dreamed-of lucky discovery. Happy chance was the great weapon of the seekers, for there were scores of highly-qualified mining experts who, with unceasing energy, had been striving for that lucky vein for months—and the majority without result.

For some three square miles there was known to be silver in the ground in varying degrees, and, of course, these three square miles had long since been mapped and seized. Outside that charmed circle there were many other properties staked out; some, perhaps, of little value, some of prospective value, some of no value at all. To the crowd of adventurers even the most unlikely property had its thrill.

I entered Cobalt one Friday morning in late September, and with some companions was met by a band of brown-faced men in Sunday best, who conducted us to the new Opera House, a spacious wooden hall, then hardly completed. We were formally welcomed, and, in common with other favoured visitors, I received the "Freedom of Cobalt," to which was attached a lump of virgin silver as a seal. Here are extracts from the document—

"We have great pleasure on behalf of the Municipal Council of the town of Cobalt and the

Council of the Township of Colman and its citizens generally to offer you a hearty welcome to what we believe will become the greatest silver mining camp on the Continent of America. We extend to you the freedom of the town and district during your stay, and should you see anything that you fancy you have nothing to do but to attach it."

The joke was carried out excellently, because subsequently, when a little group of journalists, including myself, visited one particular mine, four stalwart miners were placed across the entrance of the chamber in which they were busy examining an accumulated stock of silver; and in another place, where the journalists handled silver bricks, the bricks were heated to a degree which made them unpleasant to the touch.

I went to several mines which were successful. I remember one in particular. Over a rough track cut in the pines on the hillside I was driven to an extensive property on the side of a little lake. In shafts near the lake men with pick and shovel and drill were excavating ore rich in silver, nickel, and cobalt—silver, of course, being the principal thing sought for. The ore, looking like grey stone, was brought up and taken into rough timber working rooms, where block by block it was placed on benches in front of young men with hammers who crushed it down in pieces the size of a man's hand.

On these small pieces one could see little white shreds of downy filigree patches. That was the silver. The lumps were placed in boxes, each of which contained a weight of 125 lbs. About a hundred of these boxes were sent away from this particular mine every week, each box being worth about £30. I asked the taciturn, brown young mine manager if there were no danger of theft.

"Oh yes," he said, "there have been attempts. I go armed. Three of my men go armed. I always have two guards on duty at night."

The manager took me into his log cabin, and I could see daylight through the crevices. His lot was no bed of roses, and I do not think he had always slept in log cabins. On a rude shelf above his rough couch was his library, and it included volumes of Montaigne and Stevenson. In the corner of the cabin on the floor were sleeping peacefully two young men who at night guarded the camp with revolvers. They were wrapped round in rugs.

Many were the interesting tales I heard during my short stay in Cobalt, and, of course, a goodly proportion of them related to the luck of prospectors.

"We hear of the successes, but not of the failures," said Professor Millar, the Government geologist. "Here is a success. I came to Cobalt

in the spring of 1904 to make some investigations. I met up here Mr. Trethewy, who was on a shooting expedition. We stayed together. One afternoon he left his rifle at home and went for a leisurely stroll over the hills. It was during that afternoon's walk that he noticed a tiny streak in the rocks. That accidental discovery has already made him three hundred thousand pounds."

The evening after hearing this story I dined with a hard-faced mining engineer who had spent the best years of his life in mining camps from Alaska to Mexico, and I learned several things about Cobalt. It was, I gathered, a prohibition mining camp, in which the sale of any liquor was forbidden, and to procure a bottle of whisky it was necessary to travel many miles. I learned, moreover, that Cobalt, being in Canada, was not permitted the free use of shooting weapons, like the American camps. My granite-faced friend shook his head. He was quite sour about the matter. "They stop men carrying a revolver," he said. "Nonsense, I call it. I don't believe in these peaceful camps. What does it mean? It means that disputes are settled with fists, instead of revolvers. All the undesirable and quarrelsome people just live on and make themselves a nuisance. You take it from me, there is nothing like a funeral a day to keep objectionable people quiet

in a camp." With a sigh he raised his glass of (prohibition) water and drank deeply.

The visit to Cobalt was part of a journey to various parts of Ontario, and with some colleagues I had the advantage of being conducted over the State by the Hon. Frank Cochrane, Minister of Land, Forests, and Mines. We would inspect a place during the day and at night would sleep in a Pullman on our way to some other place. Let me give an example of a typical twenty-four hours. We were at Sault Ste Marie, a little town on the rapids which link up Lake Huron and Lake Superior. When here I saw my first Red Indian, and I shall never forget my cold disappointment when I saw he was dressed in European clothes—and shabby at that. Sault Ste Marie has plenty of things of interest to the traveller. One of them is the almost unaltered old block-house of the Hudson Bay Company. The block-house built of wood comes out from the bottom something like a square mushroom, and is without what may be called a ground floor, in order that it might the better repel the attacks of Indians in the old days.

They work hard all the time at Sault Ste Marie, and at a banquet at which we were entertained by the authorities the toasts went on till after midnight, and it was near two o'clock

when we went off to our temporary home in the Pullman car in the railway siding. At seven o'clock in the morning we began our day's journey. Of the miles we went there is no count, and all that can be said with certainty is that we were travelling for hours through stretches of tangled scrub and hills covered with spruce and pine.

We were on our way to see some copper mines. At ten o'clock we pulled into a siding and found ourselves in the centre of a village of wood houses among trees and barren hills. Half a dozen men were standing on the track to greet us as we got out, and among them were the mayor (every little village seemed to have its mayor), three mining officials, and two hard-handed men, who actually worked with pick and shovel, and came up casually to see what the fuss was about. At the little wooden hotel near by we sat down to breakfast, substantial but unusual, for it included cheese and ice-cream, and the drink was whisky. We puzzled over that breakfast. Half-way through the mistake was explained.

"Gentlemen," said the chairman, in a kind of public aside, "I think it should be stated that our friends intended to entertain us to lunch. There has been a mistake. We are having lunch instead of breakfast."

After that some of us asked our hosts for tea

and coffee, and although we were obviously regarded as weaklings, we obtained it.

Fortified, we went out to descend a copper mine. In a little wood shed a black well gaped at us, and, having received a candle, four of us buttoned our coats tightly and stepped into a shaking skeleton lift and went down the well with a rush. It was not merely dark, but cold, and it was wet also, the water dripping on us continually. With the bare candles in our hands, the lift quivering and shaking as with palsy, with the grey-brown half-hewn rock rushing upward past us within a six-inch touch, the descent seemed long and venturesome, and it was pleasant to feel the bump which told us that we had reached the bottom. Round us was a tiny cavern hewn out of solid rock, with mystery everywhere, and the darkness was emphasised by candles fastened in the mining caps of the men who met us.

A winding passage led away from this chasm, just an oozing tubular hole, and we stumbled along it for a couple of hundred feet, wondering where a strange humming noise was coming from. Presently, at the blind end of the passage, the source of the secret noise was made known, for three or four men were engaged in forcing holes into the solid rock with drills. In the sides and in the roof above us could be seen little golden gleams

in the grey surface. "Copper," said one of the guides.

The drills, driven by compressed air, made a deafening noise and filled the place with dust. A dozen or so of miners and visitors were grouped in a space literally insufficient to swing a cat. And while we were thus crammed one upon the other, a miner unconcernedly put dynamite charges into two of the holes made by the drill. We visitors began to retire down the passage towards the lift with an affectation of leisureliness that deceived no one. "It is very rarely that any one is killed," remarked one of the officials, and we crowded into the lift regardless of the dripping water and the candle-grease.

Out in the fresh air once more, we had a charming surprise. Our Minister in charge took us across to the village school, which was in a little clearing surrounded by scrub. The Canadian children were filed out on to the green for our inspection, and after singing most sweetly "The Maple Leaf for Ever," one little maiden presented the senior bachelor of the party with a bunch of flowers. "Kiss her," commanded the Minister. Blushingly the bachelor obeyed, amid cheers. The lady teachers smiled. "What have the teachers done?" cried the Minister. Then it was the Englishmen who smiled, and they looked at the teachers, but the

teachers hurriedly gathered their children together for school again.

Within an hour we were speeding away in our Pullman to a famous lumber camp. It had the picturesque name of Blind River. We arrived at mid-afternoon, and several Canadian boys drove us at breakneck pace to a wooden hall, where a lumberman's lunch was prepared for us. We ate what we supposed to be beef, innocently unconscious that it was moose out of season. Those who have read the romances of Stewart Edward White would have had the intensest interest could they have seen the scene that was spread before us. Blind River is a stream as well as a village, and the river brings down from the forests square miles of logs, which are seized upon by the saw mills and split into ribbons, an inch or so thick, for transport. All day and all night the ruthless work goes on. A little army of men, lumberers and sawyers, earn from fifty shillings to nine pounds a week. A building on the river bank comprising a saw mill was like a greedy, insatiable giant. The logs were logs in name only, because really they were sections of trees, and measured some sixteen feet long and about two feet thick. They were fed into one part of the building by the water, were seized by steel arms, twisted as a mother twists her baby in her lap, and finally flung

endways against cruel, never-ceasing saws. There were many saws. It will be a sufficient indication of what is accomplished in twenty-four hours to state that a log two feet in diameter and sixteen feet long is cut lengthways in four seconds. What is a rough tree one minute is a slip of shining white spruce the next.

Gloaming was upon us when we set off in our Pullman for the last section of our day's work. Again our destination had a romantic name. It was Espanola, a city of pulp mills, on the picturesque "Spanish River." When we reached Espanola darkness lay heavy all around us over the woods, but here in the foreground electric bulbs lit up the wooden town and told us once more the oft-repeated tale of Canadian energy. Where the electric beams stabbed the darkness we could catch glimpses of more logs on the river's surface, all finding a goal at this building on the river brink. The logs were admitted to receive more drastic treatment than those at the saw mills. Sawn into half lengths, they were run into crushing machines which ground them into a cream. That wooden cream was dried, compressed, and in an hour turned into a thick stiff paper. Really it was not paper but pulp, to be exported in immense quantities for paper-making.

We went to bed in the Pullman with the

knowledge that we must be up betimes to inspect nickel mines.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Cochrane, as he toasted us at midnight, "Ontario is a land of varied and extensive resources."

CHAPTER VII

A SCOTLAND YARD MAN

THE name of Scotland Yard has a touch of adventure about it. It is the kind of name which Robert Louis Stevenson would have chosen for the headquarters of secrecy and adventure, for it has a suggestive reticence and a certain "click" which savours of dangerous action.

To the popular mind Scotland Yard is the rendezvous of polished detectives, who go out on dare-devil missions at all hours of the day and night, and who do desperate deeds in privacy for the good of the community. In reality, Scotland Yard is a large, square, unpretentious red building on the bank of the Thames, a stone's throw from the Houses of Parliament, and it forms the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police Force, which comprises not only detectives but our uniformed constables as well. A comparatively small section is taken up with what is known as the Criminal

Investigation Department—that is to say, the detective section, and it is this detective section which is most associated in the public mind with the name of Scotland Yard. The plain exterior, the commonplace, office-like interior produce on the newspaper-reading visitor a first impression of disappointment, and this disappointment is emphasised when, in place of the distinguished-looking detectives whom he expected to see issuing in leisurely manner from its portals, he witnesses straggling twos and threes of policemen in uniform coming and going, and sees a policeman as a kind of sentry at each of the several doors.

"It's just a police barracks," is the thought that springs to the mind of one who has read magazine stories written by those who have only a hearsay knowledge of the London police system. The proceedings inside all help towards the disillusionment. There is a counter fronting two or three police, who make records of callers; there are long corridors with rooms occupied by clerks, some at work on typewriters, some classifying documents of all kinds; there are rooms in the possession of chiefs of the departments, who sit at roll-top desks or flat-top writing tables, and who look like prosperous solicitors or successful business men. A matter-of-factness rules the whole establishment. That is the surface view.

Go a little deeper, learn a little more of the detective branch of Scotland Yard, and you will find that, after all, a good many happenings every day, and a large proportion of the work that is done by a comparatively small group of men there, do partake of the adventurous, and are quite secret. The magazine story writers, although they go wrong in their atmosphere, have nevertheless some of the essentials. Intrigue, danger, sinister effort, and desperate venture are part of the daily programme of this matter-of-fact modern office. The people there do not treat their business as being in any way romantic. The officers, some of them in highly responsible positions, have, with the exception of a few men at the top, risen from the ranks of policemen themselves, and they have neither the taste nor the inclination to talk of daily investigation as romance, to idealise crime, nor to think of a dangerous adventure but as a confounded nuisance which has to be encountered in the way of business. Bluntness is in all their actions, and they laugh unfeelingly among themselves at those who would exalt them into heroes or make them out to be past-masters of ingenuity and subtle craft. Perhaps it is these facts which add a freshness and a pungency to the Scotland Yard exploits, which, not unfrequently, do not reach the ears of the public, and to the Scotland

Yard blunders which very frequently do come to their notice.

Some of the men are quite uninteresting, and among them are those who hold high positions, because promotion in the service, like that of our other services, has been regulated—at any rate, with some regard to years of service and good conduct. But there have been several interesting personalities in recent years. One of them was to be found in Mr. Frank Froest, who, when I first knew him, was an ordinary detective inspector, but whom Sir Edward Henry, the Chief Commissioner, on introducing new methods, promoted with rapidity until he at last became chief of the executive of his department. As a superintendent, Mr. Froest ruled its activities until he retired a few months ago. He had travelled the world, and had been in many kinds of adventure. He it was who arrested Dr. Jameson for the Jameson Raid, and brought him home to England, and it was he who captured Jabez Balfour in South America.

Mr. Froest was a thick-set, deep-chested, blue-eyed man, with a baldish head and a dandyish, up-turned moustache. His finger-nails were always delicately manicured, and in spite of the fact that he cultivated a smart debonair manner, he was a man of great physical strength, and in his younger days could break sixpences in half on his fingers.

There you have a glimpse of the exterior of Frank Froest.

Hardly one of the attributes of Sherlock Holmes was to be found about him. Stolid good humour enwrapped him, and he was a fine raconteur. Quiet and reserved was he at times, and no man could keep a secret tighter, and yet withal bear to the world a hail-fellow-well-met air. He had, moreover, a hearty laugh and listened with sympathy to the commonplaces of all kinds of mediocrity. Of course, he was popular. A man with such traits was bound to be popular.

I dare say there have been those who, in meeting Frank Froest and knowing his reputation, have wondered how it was that a man who carried so little sign of subtlety, should have risen high. After a good many years' acquaintance with him, I think that Frank Froest had qualities which he contrived to hide behind a perfectly natural geniality. Those who have listened to his excellent stories, pungent and otherwise, and who have known him as one of the best of good fellows, would hardly recognise the tenacious attributes which lay behind those laughing eyes and the common-sense observation which was always in readiness.

Frank Froest has fought with murderers, has been entertained at country houses, has mixed with Continental and American swindlers at fashionable

London hotels, has talked with professional men on social terms, has exchanged badinage with irreclaimable criminals, and yet, I am certain, he has never said a single word which was indiscreet or done an indiscreet thing. It is a great thing to make your opponents underrate you.

He must often have led those whom he met into a totally wrong appraisement of his capability, and, with all his fun, good humour, and anecdote, he was, in fact, one of the most silent of men. Acquaintances heard nothing that mattered from him, although many of them were without doubt prepared to swear that they knew the inmost secrets of his inmost heart. This was one phase of Froest's personality. Add to this an undeviating shrewdness, and you begin to sum him up. There is another thing that has to be taken into account. This amiable, good fellow with the twinkling blue eyes and the manicured finger-nails, was almost entirely lacking in those sensibilities which go to make up what is known as physical fear. I do not think he would take it as any special recommendation. He was just gifted by nature with the power not to be afraid of physical dangers. That is a remarkable asset to an ambitious man in the detective force.

Stories about him are many, and they would make a fascinating book. His first real success as

a detective in the London police force was when, as a police-sergeant, he committed a theft to further his official ends. A young lady of well-to-do family was missing, and no trace of her could be found anywhere, and her people were convinced that she had met with a fatal accident or had been spirited away.

Rewards were offered. Private detectives put forth much energy, but all in vain. The aid of Scotland Yard was sought, and Frank Froest, a young plain-clothes officer, was switched on to the job. He went into the thing thoroughly.

He came to the unexpected conclusion that the young lady had gone away on her own accord, although such a suggestion, had he made it, would have struck her relatives dumb with indignant surprise.

Frank Froest tried various means of getting at the facts. He studied the London district in which she lived, marked down the nearest matrimonial agency, and he went and called on the proprietor of this agency—an old man who strenuously repudiated the idea that the girl had been in touch with his office in any way.

In the course of the conversation the detective noticed among other photographs on the mantelpiece of the room that of a girl and a man together, the look of the former bearing a general resemblance to the description of the missing girl which had

been supplied to him. He made an excuse to send the proprietor of the matrimonial agency out of the room to get a book for examination. When he was out, Froest put the photograph of the man and woman in his pocket, and went off out of the place without the old man knowing anything of the abstraction. It was a lucky hit. The girl in the portrait was the missing girl, and, by the help of the picture, he found that she had gone off with a young man as romantic as herself. There was no question of kidnapping or of fatal accident. That was Froest's first adventure in London.

One can but give a story here and there from the web of adventure in which he was enmeshed for so many years afterwards. He was still a young officer when there came news by wire from America that a desperate criminal was on board a cattle boat which had just left New York for Liverpool. He was a cowboy from one of the Western States who had killed at intervals six different people—farmers or ranchmen, and had somehow escaped the hand of the law and had reached New York and got a place as cattleman aboard the steamer. Only after the steamer had left did the authorities track him. It was to meet this desperado at Queenstown that Frank Froest was dispatched from London. He enlisted the aid of two local officers, and when the cattle boat

arrived outside of the harbour, Froest and his two colleagues went off in a boat to board her. On reaching the deck, he was at once in the midst of some of the men, and he quickly espied the cowboy, because the latter was a big man, and possessed marked characteristics, notably huge hands and wrists. Froest stepped up to him, with the ostensible purpose of arresting him, but prepared for battle.

The man did not hesitate. He guessed what Frank Froest was after, and flung himself bodily at the detective. There was a terrific struggle upon the deck.

When two men are fighting hard, and when one of them, as in this case, has drawn a sheath knife, and is stabbing furiously at his opponent, it is not easy for outsiders to interfere. In that lurid minute the other police officers and other people on the ship could do nothing to help the young detective. It was really touch and go with him. The cowboy slashed with his knife, its furious jabs going through clothing here and there.

The up-and-down struggle was ended by Froest getting his man down on his back, and it was only a matter of seconds then for the handcuffs to be placed on him. That was the exciting beginning of an interesting episode. Down in the man's box was found some of the bloodstained garments of the

people he had murdered—stockings, for instance, soaked in blood. The handle of the knife with which he had tried to stab the detective was notched in six places—one notch for every life he had taken. Froest has that knife now. He laughingly recalls the possibility that he might have made the seventh notch.

When the man had been brought to London and locked up, the authorities in his State—Wisconsin—were communicated with, and in course of time a sheriff came over from the State to take the prisoner back to America. Frank Froest was sent up from the Yard to meet him at Euston in order to conduct him to the detective headquarters. Since that time the famous detective has travelled all over the world, and he has told me that never in the course of his travellings has he ever—north, south, east, or west—seen a person in any way closely resembling the typical example of an American to be found in our comic journals. The only time he ever saw a person who resembled these drawings was on this occasion when he went to Euston to meet the sheriff's officer from Wisconsin. There was no mistaking him—slouch hat, goatee beard, top boots—all were *en règle*. Froest stepped up to him at once with a cheery word of welcome. The sheriff frowned on him—gave him a sour look of suspicion.

"You're from Wisconsin?" said Froest. Like lightning the hand of the American went round to his hip pocket.

"You don't try those tricks on me, stranger," said he. His face displayed his purpose, for he had mistaken the detective for some British "sharp" who was trying to impose upon him as a newly-arrived stranger.

Frank Froest says he has been through a good deal, but this was the only time in his life that a revolver has been drawn upon him in Euston Station. He did not press his acquaintance with the sheriff, but left him to make his way to Scotland Yard as best he might.

Let me give a story of a different kind. Frank Froest once went to South Africa to arrest a celebrated sharper, whose name began with T. T—— was a very accomplished swindler indeed, an expert in several departments of his diverse science. Latterly, he had flown at high game.

Frank Froest arrested and brought him back to this country, and T—— on the voyage lightened time by exchanging anecdotes with his captor. Here is one of the swindler's stories—

"I went to Australia once in order to see what could be done, and found myself up in a mining camp which was doing very well. Going into a saloon, and having a drink, and looking round, I

saw a couple of men playing cards at a table. They were two local cardsharpers, and, spotting me as a 'pigeon' to be plucked, they presently offered me a word of welcome. I didn't mind; I used to do a bit with cards myself years before. I went over and joined them. There was a hand or two, and then I stopped and rang the bell for the waiter. The other two chaps looked at me in surprise. When the waiter came I said, 'Bring me the paint-pot and a paint-brush.'"

"'What the devil for?' asked one of the men.

"'Why,' said I to them, 'I see you have not marked them *all!*'"

I asked Frank Froest once to tell me what was the narrowest escape he ever had from death, and after laughing and saying he never had any narrow escapes, he told me this story: He had been deputed to shadow a French criminal who had landed here, and he shadowed him for a couple of days before arresting him on the Embankment. On the way to the police station the man became quite communicative. "I am rather glad the suspense is over," he said; "it has been a wretched time since I have been here. I knew some of you were shadowing me, although you did not think I knew. It made me pretty desperate. Do you remember strolling along behind me in Piccadilly?"

"Yes," said Froest.

"Well, when we got well along towards Piccadilly Circus I was worked up to a pitch which nearly brought things to an end. I had a loaded revolver in my pocket. I stepped into a doorway of a jeweller's shop in order to wait for you to come up abreast of me. I had made up my mind to shoot you and then to shoot myself. For some reason you went up a side turning—up to Vine Street, I think—and that saved you."

Point is given to this narrative by the fact that this man subsequently served a term at a French penal settlement for the murder of an acquaintance of his in France.

CHAPTER VIII

LONDON EPISODES

I WENT out one September Sunday evening to find, if possible, the music hall which I had been told existed in the East End and did a good business on Sunday evenings.

It was a damp and dirty winter night, and the two pavements of Commercial Road, Whitechapel, were lined by never-ending streams of people—people for the most part with black hair and shining eyes; for I was in the Ghetto, and four out of five of the people were Jews. With much searching and after many inquiries I eventually reached a modest doorway with a half-hoop of coloured glass above the door. A hall-porter in shabby uniform was beneath the coloured glass. Past him in the passage I found a little desk, and from a pigeon-hole a lady with bright eyes made quick and pleasant inquiries as to what I wanted to pay. I was not quite at home, and, rather awkwardly, I was asking the price of admission,

when a couple of Jews came towards me from the end of the passage and tried to persuade me that there was really nothing to see, that the performance was merely a benefit on behalf of a Jew in trouble, that only Jews were present, and that the performance was in Yiddish. What possible interest could I find in the proceedings? They gently suggested I had better go away. I expressed my sympathy with the beneficiary, and I manifested my feeling by a donation of half a crown, quite apart from any entrance fee. I think I paid sixpence eventually to go in.

The performance had commenced when I entered. The building was well lighted with incandescent gas, had its walls decorated with big mirrors, and contained some two or three hundred people, all of whom were watching intently and seriously the little stage on which two men in dilapidated garments were footing an emasculated Russian jig. Not a sign of amusement was there among the audience. The whole assembly might have been engaged in a religious rite. All at once the dancers stopped. There was rapid exchange of words in the strange, musical Yiddish, and a little laughter sprang from the audience, joined a minute later by a good deal of hand-clapping when the dancers skipped off the stage in orthodox style.

In the course of a couple of minutes' interval

the people chattered and laughed among themselves, while an unshaven, middle-aged Jew brought round refreshments in the shape of halfpenny cakes in bags, and glasses of lemonade. All sorts and sizes of Jews were in the closely-packed chairs. The first two rows had what may be called the aristocrats of the gathering, for there were big shirt-fronts on some of the men, and the ladies were wearing much jewellery. But the stalls were not inviolate. In the very middle of the front row was a middle-aged Jew with slight brown beard and a shabby coat, who looked remarkably like the pavement dealer in toys who used to stand near Whitechapel Station. Moreover, the comfort of the aristocrats was disturbed by a boy of fifteen, who, with cap on the head and cigarette in mouth, walked between two rows of stalls and puffed the smoke unconcernedly in the faces of the stall-holders.

Behind sat row after row of Jews, tightly packed and quietly talking. In the rear of the hall were youths wearing neckerchiefs for collars, and with caps pulled forward over their foreheads. "A tough lot," some one called them; but they were as well-behaved as the occupants of the dress circle at a West End theatre.

Between the scenes a black-haired young man, whose portrait was given on the programme, lounged on the stage, and in thrilling Yiddish

announced the next turn. Sometimes a strange remark was thrown at him, and then he would speak and languidly converse with the audience for a minute or two, and finally disappear in a torrent of good-humoured Yiddish. Besides being the M.C., he was one of the performers. Once he came on and sang what, from the opening bars, promised to be a humorous song, but it had a plaintive chorus, in which the word "fatherland" could easily be distinguished even by a stranger. The chorus silenced the audience. No one spoke. One woman, with a little baby, who wanted to cry, licked its face all the time to keep it quiet.

The spirit of things was changed by the next performer, a stout man, dressed in women's clothes, who sought to rouse laughter by the accustomed antics of a second-rate comedian. He sang a London cockney song, with all its cockney embellishments in Yiddish. Conceive a stout, slow-eyed Jew running about the stage in skirts shouting out a Yiddish "Hi-tiddly-hi-ti." He roused no enthusiasm, though there was a little perfunctory applause and some fleeting smiles. The comic man was followed by a troupe in the smocks of Russian peasants, who sketched the horrors and sorrows of the Jew abroad.

Presently there was a lively dance, followed attentively, but without elation. English Jews

were all these people gathered together to enjoy themselves in the careless English way; and yet it was impossible for Englishmen not to see that here was a race of strangers. The soul of the gathering was entirely different from the soul of an English gathering. Sometimes in the performance the audience applauded with a touch of boisterousness, but there was always present a sense of melancholy. It was typified in the slim and graceful girl who in the last turn enacted the part of a poor Russian wife. Her dark eyes, even in the happiest moments of the play, wore an undercurrent of sadness, the sadness which comes from racial dreams and centuries of trouble. When, after a recall, she smiled and put her hands to her lips with her pretty white teeth showing, she still had with her that undercurrent of sadness. The light of Israel was in her eyes.

* * * * *

Let me take the reader to another kind of scene altogether. On the morning of June 23, 1911, I stepped into the page of a history book for a little while. I was within the spacious annexe of Westminster Abbey, which that day formed part of the Abbey itself, and was the royal ante-chamber and the meeting-place of royalties and nobles assembling for the coronation. They all talked like ordinary people, but they were decked in the

gorgeous robes and bore the accoutrements of the picturesque Middle Ages. It gave one a kind of Peter Pan sensation. I was back in the days of boyhood, with history dates in mind and the memory of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. One stepped from Victoria Street into the atmosphere of Stanley Weyman, with courtiers and princesses joking with each other, with priceless jewels in a heap near by, and tapestries made in the days of knights of old.

One had to get up very early to travel from the suburbs to Westminster, because of the clearing of the streets by the police and the preservation of the royal route against the pressure of the hundreds of thousands of people who had come from all parts of the country and abroad to witness the ceremonies in connection with the Coronation Day. At seven in the morning the Underground Station at Victoria was thronged, and the streets were already overflowing, and at eight, when I entered the elaborate annexe of Westminster Abbey, lords and ladies were already arriving for the ceremony later on.

Like a great hall was the annexe, with soft green carpet over the whole of it, the only interruptions of its openness being the wooden supporting pillars, around which were placed armour from centuries ago and old weapons, one of which—so it was said—had caused the death of a French king.

Tapestries, which had been insured for £70,000, lent by one of the ancient families, hung around the sides. A small table on one side bore a portion of the regalia, and the only other furniture consisted of little round stools here, there, and everywhere, on which the waiting notabilities could rest themselves. Through the annexe was the principal means of access to the Abbey for the more distinguished of the visitors, and a good many of them made it a rendezvous for an hour or more before passing to their seats.

Those people with the greatest titles and the highest positions waited on throughout until the King and Queen arrived; and thus for the best part of the morning the hall was a place full of vivacity and colour, and presented a scene memorable not only for picturesqueness, but also for associations. The heads of famous families were here with their House of Lords garb of scarlet and ermine, with their glittering coronets, and their dazzling stars and other decorations across their breasts; wives and daughters, as well as heads of families, were here robed with magnificence, bejewelled, with pages carrying their elaborate trains; young sons of the families were here, too, in the white satin Court dress, and the red heeled shoes of centuries ago. These boys scampered joyfully across the green carpet swinging their

fathers' coronets in their hands, enjoying the great occasion with a naturalness denied to their elders.

Persons of distinction apart from birth were in the annexe. Sir Wilfred Laurier, a romantic figure at any time, strode across the floor enrobed in a flowing robe of azure blue which descended from his shoulders to his feet. Bishops stood in a knot in one corner chatting together with Lord Rosebery. Famous generals, of whom Lord Kitchener was one, went and peeped in the Abbey, and came back again to join the dukes and duchesses grouped here and there about the place. I saw one peer, who has been separated from his wife, standing in reflective attitude just as his wife came sailing in, making straight for the interior of the Abbey. Very splendid she looked. The peer woke up instantly, turned on his heel, and went to a side door to see what the weather was like.

Somebody came in with a tray bearing a crown glittering with diamonds. It was placed on a kind of sideboard. Leaning against the wall near it was the sceptre of England.

Chatter went on all round amid the various crowds. Princess Patricia of Connaught entered with some other younger royalties and sat down on stools near a group of three Pressmen who, it is safe to conjecture, were not known as Pressmen by the assembled company. A young princess knocked

over a stool and a newspaper man readjusted it for her, and had some royal and vivacious thanks. Young princes from abroad—I think from Denmark—made another group, and they chatted freely together as they swung miniature coronets to and fro by their suspending ribbons. "They would do very well to carry things in," I heard one of them say, and there was much laughter.

The Marquis of Londonderry, a big, burly, jovial figure, entered in full robes, carrying under his arm a couple of newspapers, and, after greetings here and there, he dropped on a stool, placed one newspaper on the stool near him, and opened the other to peruse it. He read with deep interest until a duchess came up and laughingly challenged him, and then he had to exchange a few words with her before she passed on and he could resume the reading of his newspaper. An enthusiast had a camera, and he persuaded the Duke of Northumberland to stand up against the wall holding in front of him the Queen's crown on a cushion so that a photograph might be taken of him.

People came and went, a good many passed on into the Abbey. Animation was everywhere, and there was no doubt about the human expectation of all this blue-blooded crowd—men, women, and children. Some time before the King and Queen were expected Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister,

walked in. Beyond an inclination of the head and a passing word, they paid little attention to him. He found a seat, sat down, and flung a cold eye over the assembly, and he looked like a man who was saying to himself, "Well, well; I suppose I must put up with it since the King is coming." A peeress went and spoke to him in the course of a few minutes, and was very courteous and kindly to him, and some of the other peers afterwards spoke for a moment or two with him. But on the whole he was neglected, for it has to be remembered that it was just at this time that the crisis about the Parliament Act was approaching, and the fate of the House of Lords hung in the balance. A fellow Pressman by my side whispered to me, "See that peer who went across and polished his coronet on his sleeve in front of Asquith?" I had not seen anything of the kind, for the speaker was a wag. But the remark illustrates the kind of feeling produced by the scene. My friend went so far as to suggest that before the morning was out there would be a semi-circle of peers sitting round the isolated Mr. Asquith, glaring at him, all polishing their coronets on their sleeves, as a sign of their defiance of him and all his works. Alas! I was not privileged to watch that animated and exhilarating spectacle.

Presently there was a great rumbling from the

outside world, and we knew that tens of thousands of people were cheering the approach of the King and Queen. A space of five minutes passed while they were in the dressing-room in the annexe, undergoing the process of robing, and meanwhile the nobles, the generals, the bishops, and the statesmen formed themselves up in procession to accompany their Sovereign into the Abbey for the culminating ceremony. Some of the nobles held ancient banners aloft. The bishops carried between them the Bible and sacramental vessels. Glittering diamond crowns were carried on cushions by noblemen. Lord Kitchener, appropriately enough, held aloft one of the great ceremonial swords of state. Princess Patricia and other Princesses stood in readiness with their trains spread-eagled and upheld by large numbers of little pages.

A sudden silence fell over the annexe as the King and Queen emerged from the dressing-room and came forward to take their part in the procession. The Queen looked stern, rather stiff, very upright, but composed. The King, with the speckled ermine Cap of Maintenance on his head, revealed his shortness of stature. He was pale and looked nervous, and no wonder, considering what the occasion was to him. There was the young princess, a bonny young girl, who appeared

strangely out of place amid all the glitter and flaming robes; and there was the Prince of Wales, too, a well-set-up boy of seventeen, who walked with the easy gait of a lad who has not a care on his shoulders and who loves outdoor life. Slowly the Royalties, with the attendant procession, passed to the Abbey, and a great gush of music burst forth.

The annexe had suddenly become a very lonely place. The point of life and spectacle had shifted fifty yards to the west of us. The play in the annexe was at an end.

* * * * *

One of the pictures etched on my mind in connection with London will always be the first appearance of Dr. Crippen in this country when brought back from Canada in connection with the death of Mrs. Crippen. Crippen has since been hanged as a murderer. The horrifying story of the discovery of Mrs. Crippen's body beneath the cellar floor at Crippen's residence in the north of London, the flight of Crippen, his discovery by means of wireless telegraphy on board a ship bound for Canada, and his arrest in company with his companion, Miss Le Neve, and his conveyance back to this country—all these things will be fresh in the memory of those who read the newspapers.

One of the extraordinary features of the whole story was the devotion of this middle-aged,

unprepossessing man for a young and attractive-looking girl, Miss Le Neve, who went away with him. Of course, Miss Le Neve knew nothing of the murder, and it is inconceivable that she should have had anything to do with Crippen if she had known him to be the murderer he was afterwards proved to be. Nevertheless, at the time I speak of she knew what he was charged with, knew the public odium which surrounded him, and she still clung to him, clung to him as affectionately as he, a brutal murderer, did to her. Here, then, was the couple whom I saw at the police court on a morning towards the end of August, 1910.

Intense was the interest aroused by the official hearing of the charge against them on their arrival in this country. They were brought to London to be taken before the chief magistrate at Bow Street, and hundreds of sightseers gathered in the neighbourhood of the court in the morning eager for admission, and I remember how busy were the police in moving the crowds on. The representatives of the Press by themselves were in such large numbers that they had to be formed up in a queue outside the doors of the court, and were only admitted on the presentation of their cards.

Mr. Marsham, the veteran stipendiary, came in and took his seat on the bench, and immediately

he had composed himself the door at the side opposite the dock swung inwards for the entry of the two prisoners. All in court—Sir Charles Mathews, the Public Prosecutor, the thick cluster of police and detectives, the score of reporters and artists—swept round with one accord and fixed their eyes on the opening door. There emerged a graceful, erect girl in dark-blue costume, with spreading dark-blue hat, her face half hidden in a motor veil of lighter hue. Behind her walked a plump-faced little man in a grey frock-coat rather too large for him. The man's big protuberant eyes were emphasised by an almost total lack of brows; and a very little nose and half-grown moustache, a fleshly little chin, a wide, upright forehead, and only sufficient hair to indicate a parting in the middle, gave the first impression of Crippen. This impression, however, was imperfect. It was quite an inadequate description of the man after he had been seen for a minute or two, for it was the vivacity of his face that made up his personality. The portraits of him which had been printed in the papers with his spectacles and severe aspect made him somewhat wooden. In real life, he carried the message of thoughtfulness, apprehension, sensitiveness. One would never have thought that he was a cold-blooded murderer. He walked into the dock

behind Miss Le Neve with quiet, confident demeanour. The intense silence, the concentrated scrutiny of the crowded court would have had effect on a man of weak nerves, but no sign appeared on the diminutive boyish face of Crippen as he turned in the middle of the dock, and side by side with Miss Le Neve faced the magistrate. His fringe of fair hair at the back of his head was long; it descended over the top of his collar behind, I remember. His light-grey frock-coat was ill-fitting and came beneath his knees.

As for Miss Le Neve, she was a great contrast in every way from the human standpoint. She was a graceful girl of excellent figure, with soft, clear complexion and steady eyes. Her lips were full. It was not hard to read, despite her self-command, capacity for much emotion. Both prisoners rested their arms on the iron bar at the top of the dock in front of them, and their elbows touched each other as they stood together there facing the magistrate.

This man who had killed his wife, buried her beneath the cellar, and lived with Miss Le Neve in the room adjoining for months afterwards, was a study for the most ruthless analyst of human morals and emotions. You could see the innate gentleness of the man as you looked at him. The evidence revealed the tenderness with which

he had treated Miss Le Neve. But what of the girl? Here was a really beautiful young creature in the prime of young womanhood, who might have been expected, whatever her initial inclination, to have been revolted by the charge which had been made against the man at her side, for she was guiltless, mind you, and must have brought a shocked mind to appear upon the terrible crime.

What happened? She clung closer to the man. He was elderly, insignificant and ugly. She was young, handsome, and appealing, and yet with every look and gesture she indicated that she was as fascinated with him as he was with her.

Piece by piece the official narrative was laid before the magistrates, and Inspector Dew, from Scotland Yard, who went to Canada to arrest the couple, told portions of a new story. In a quiet voice he read out a message which he believed to be in Crippen's writing, indicating intention of suicide—a damning statement in the circumstances, hitherto not known and perhaps believed by Crippen to be undiscovered. He showed no sign. Sometimes a man's hands betray him when his face is steady. Crippen's white fingers, with their delicately-manicured nails, were loosely linked together in full view of the court, as with

his elbows still on the front rail of the dock, he leaned forward to listen. They showed entire restfulness. Miss Le Neve was different. In her delicate white fingers she held some black gloves, and as the evidence progressed those black gloves were feverishly twisted backwards and forwards, and shifted from hand to hand.

Who knows? Perhaps this piece of evidence about the suggestion of suicide was new to her, and brought home for the first time some indication of what Crippen had done. He turned a quick look at her as if fearful that the evidence might hurt her. She edged her elbow a little on to his to show that she understood, and that all was well—just a tiny comforting indication. I shall always remember those two as they stood together.

I thought of the scene at the time when I had my last glimpse of Crippen on the dread day for him at the Old Bailey, when he stood between warders, grey-faced, immovable, with paralysed heart, as the judge sent him to his doom.

CHAPTER IX

A STRANGER IN RUSSIA

WHEN one goes to Victoria station and gets one's bags and portmanteaux labelled in a matter-of-fact way "Victoria to St. Petersburg," one is feeling a good deal more interested in the excitements of the journey and the romance of a new country than in any abstract considerations of good-will between nations. I went to Russia in January, 1912, in order to see something of a visit of Britishers—bishops, generals, members of Parliament, and commercial men—to St. Petersburg and Moscow, whither they had been invited by the municipalities, with the co-operation of the Imperial authorities. The English were going to get a glimpse of Russia, and were going to have a good time. I went ahead of them and I came back after them, and was only with the party as a spectator during some of their junketings. Critics said there were sinister commercial and political motives behind the arrangements; while those who

organised the visit declared it was arranged with the highest and noblest purposes. Such considerations were not for me to bother with. When I got to Victoria at about a quarter-past eight one Saturday evening I was thinking a good deal more about registering my baggage and getting a corner seat in the boat train for Folkestone than of any great international aim.

I remember the unappreciative, matter-of-fact way the porters slapped the St. Petersburg labels on my bags, as though I were going to Croydon or to Clapham Junction. I found out the difference when I came to pay for the luggage in addition to my ticket.

I stowed my kit-bag and rug in the carriage, and after buying some newspapers and magazines at the bookstall, remembering previous experiences and difficulties in getting one's boots cleaned when on the move, I went down and gave the station shoeblack a final job.

It was a damp, grey evening, and while I was having my boots polished I was thinking of snow scenes in Russia, to which I was hurrying, and wondering whether it was as cold as people said it was in January, and how I was to manage in Russia with a knowledge of Russian limited to two words. But there were a good many little experiences to go through before the time

arrived when I was face to face with these difficulties.

I was on board the Flushing boat at midnight, and with the cowardice born of experience I made for my cabin at once—for there is nothing like a prone position to encounter any disposition to sea-sickness. I was just getting comfortable when a little, black-bearded German came in and took the lower berth. Neither of us could sleep for the heat and the closeness of the cabin, and the German took the opportunity of narrating to me how he was going to Berlin to rescue his patrimony from a skilful and deceitful lawyer.

At 4 a.m. I was dressing myself preparatory to getting ashore at Flushing, where in the damp darkness we pushed with others to the landing-stage and began to make our passage over staging and through corridors to the adjacent railway station. Porters in Dutch persistently offered assistance which was refused, and in consequence I presently found myself on a wrong platform, selecting a wrong train, and making myself comfortable in a carriage which, for all I knew, would have landed me at Spitzbergen or Christiania instead of Berlin, which was my immediate objective.

In my right train presently, I found as a fellow-traveller a swarthy young man whom I afterwards

learnt was a Turk who was in partnership with his father at Salonika and Constantinople in some general stores—the "Harrods" of Turkey I gathered them to be from his conversation. He was going to Chemnitz to buy cotton goods.

We were in the light of day when, at about eight o'clock, we reached the German frontier, where the train came to a standstill, and the German Customs official entered the carriage to make sure we had no dutiable articles. He carefully examined the handbag of my fellow voyager, took a steady look at me, and passed on without any investigation of my belongings. I have often wondered whether that was a compliment or not.

A short wait, and we were on our way again —this time through Germany, and from thence onward I saw snow on the ground. Indeed, from the departure out of Holland, through Germany into Russia to St. Petersburg, south-east from St. Petersburg to Moscow, back from Moscow, through Warsaw into Germany again, and through Germany once more to the North Sea, there was snow on the earth all the time and all the way, a distance of something like 2,500 miles.

Through the flat, snow-covered country, through the great manufacturing towns we rushed in our smooth-travelling, comfortably warmed carriage, and it was just about five o'clock in the evening

when we steamed into Berlin. I spent a pleasant evening in the German capital, and at eleven o'clock was escorted to the station by some journalistic friends, and started for the Russian frontier half an hour before midnight. There were twelve hours in the train before we were to approach the little frontier town of Wirballen.

The cold increased, the snow outside grew deeper, and one felt the protection of the double windows of the carriages to be a luxury. Next morning when I awoke we were still traversing that interminable, flat country, with its snow surface broken here and there by woods. We slowed up near mid-day. Russia at last.

With the pricking expectancy always produced by an entry into a new and interesting country for the first time, I got out of the train with the other passengers on to a low platform and joined in the procession towards the open door of what in England might have been the booking-office or the passengers' waiting-room. It was extremely cold even under the protection of the station roof, and the cold was acute and biting, not at all blusterous. Away from the station one got a glimpse of the whitened country lying in utter silence.

I had no idea of what formality was necessary in entering Russia apart from the fact that, in common with the other passengers on the train,

I had been advised by the conductor to get my passport ready. I found the entrance into which we had to pass was not that of a waiting-room, but of a great apartment, tall and square, used by the Russian Customs officials. On each side of the door stood an official, a policeman probably, big, square-shouldered, florid-faced, with a happy expression, long blue overcoat, and a sword by his side, and these two officials took the passports from the outstretched hands of the passengers as they went by.

As soon as we got inside we learnt that we had to line up outside a big counter which went around three sides of the room, that our passports were to be examined in turn, and that each passenger, his passport being found unimpeachable, was to be taken to his baggage, which was then to be examined in the ordinary way. Bags, portmanteaux, trunks were fetched from the train and piled high within the protecting arms of the great counter. Groups of uniformed Russian officials walked about calmly and comfortably, and Russian workmen in smocks moved the luggage in a leisurely fashion. At one end of the Customs House, high up on the wall, was a religious picture, and in front of it a burning candle, the icon without which no apartment in Russia is complete.

At three o'clock a.m. the train was to start for

St. Petersburg, and there was consequently just three hours to wait. After fifty minutes' standing at the counter with the line of others, I began to fear that the unalterable leisureliness would prevent me from getting into the train in time. I need not have worried. It is just a way in Russia. They allow themselves time for everything. I appealed to a passing official, first in English, then in French, without result. A fellow-passenger near me spoke to a workman in German without success. Russian is the language for Russia if you want to progress there, although German is second best, French and English falling far behind. Presently I saw an official, in his gorgeous light-blue overcoat and his sword by his side, attended by a suite of three or four other officials, passing along in front of the line of waiting voyagers, calling out a name. A passport was in his hand. He was seeking for the owner of the name on the passport. Presently the owner was found and, attended by the gorgeous official and the suite, went to his baggage, which was thereupon examined and passed. That was the process that went on intermittently for an hour or more. My turn came right towards the end of the process, because it seems to be the custom for some reason or other to take the English passports last. Eventually I was approached, as had been the

others, and I trotted out some English and some French, which only led to shakes of the head on the part of the chief official. Dumb show, however, served for the occasion, and I was allowed to take my baggage without unfastening any part of it.

I visited the station restaurant, where I had the first indication of the Russian love of food, and good food, and from there I obtained my first glimpse of the grey, grim Russian train which was to take me to St. Petersburg.

Something unreal strikes one at first about these Russian trains. They are of broad gauge, apparently of tremendous height, dim grey in colour, and the engines are fed not by coal but by wood fuel. The whole train looks gigantic, inhospitable, and ungainly. As a matter of fact, the inside is very comfortable indeed, because not only does the width of the trains give ample elbow space, but affords stability and smoothness in the travelling—a pleasant state of things which is emphasised by the slow rate of progress.

I secured a sleeping berth in one of the compartments, and found that by an extra payment I could have half a compartment to myself—that is to say, instead of being one of four I could share the compartment with one other person only. This one other person chanced to be a young French

merchant on his first visit to St. Petersburg, and we chummed up together at once. He spoke not a single word of Russian. I knew two words, the equivalents for "Yes" and "No." This may seem trivial, but it was a matter of very serious import to us, because we had to travel in this train from three in the afternoon until eight o'clock next morning, and there was no restaurant on the train, and we had to depend on our efforts at the various stations to obtain sustenance. The language problem, therefore, was discussed at length as we sat by the window and watched the snow-covered stretches which we were passing through. The problem grew acute as we approached Vilna, the station where we were to stop a quarter of an hour or so. We knew there would be a rush of passengers to the refreshment room, and we determined to be in the forefront of the rush to make up for any lack of words we might possess at the crucial moment. When the time came we did a sprint up the platform and got into the station restaurant at least six yards ahead of our nearest competitors. We demanded in a duet of English and French the attention of a neighbouring waiter. He said something hurriedly which neither of us understood.

"Filets," exclaimed the Frenchman, authoritatively. A smile of comprehension came to the

Russian waiter's face. He hurried off, and he brought us two portions of meat minced up fine and coated with a tough, dough-like skin. It was hot and tender, and as we were hungry we found it very appetising. Tumultuously the other passengers surged in. At least three parts of them had a similar dish to ours—whatever they ordered.

We were on the move again in half an hour, still surrounded by the unending snow, dimly to be perceived even in the darkness. We went to bed on the strength of a glass of Russian tea with a slice of lemon in it—insipid stuff, the taste of which is only to be acquired by persistence and courageous effort. Next morning we were up betimes, and at seven o'clock were peering from the windows still at the snow, the unceasing snow, the surface of which was broken now and again by the fringe of a wood or the roof of a cottage.

It was snowing slightly when we got into the station at St. Petersburg, and the air was cold—very cold it seemed to me, although it was nothing like what one had to encounter later on. My French friend was lost to me almost immediately because he had acquaintances to meet him at the station, and I stood on the platform with people hurrying quickly around me, feeling a pretty lonely kind of individual without knowing a sentence of the language. A porter hastened up. There is a

universal understanding between railway porters and railway travellers, however divergent their race and country, and when I produced the registration ticket secured by me on Victoria Station, London, with reference to my baggage, he sprang at it like one of his native wolves and rushed away from me as though he had secured a prize. Presently he came back and said something which I did not understand in the least, but which I presumed meant there was some delay, and he then conducted me to the waiting-room to rest in the warmth for a little. It took him ten minutes to get the baggage, and he struggled off the platform presently under what seemed to me a terrific load—a trunk on his back and shoulders, suit case under one arm, kit-bag, rug and other things under the other, and he moved with a drunken instability towards the outside of the station. I followed him humbly, wonderingly, and admiringly.

The air hit one like a dagger. There was but little snow on the streets because for some days St. Petersburg had been without any fall at all, and the consequence was that in place of the usual sleighs, droskies—the light, four-wheeled open vehicles—were ranged up for passengers. The porter tumbled his load on to one of these and caused it to incline dangerously. He then wedged me into the little space between my

luggage, and tried to understand my direction, "Hotel de France."

The porter and the driver had a long and animated discussion as to what I meant. By continually repeating the word "France," and interrupting their conversation, I eventually secured a start. Two ponies were attached to the vehicle, and magnificent little animals they were. They rushed off at a word, and, like other horses in St. Petersburg, flung themselves into their work with a kind of abandon which is delightful to experience. Careering with exhilarating speed, the drosky swaying from side to side, I made my first acquaintance with the St. Petersburg main streets. They were wide, the houses were high, and the electric tramways gave a touch of home to it. But the people took you into a foreign land, and Tolstoy was in the mind at once. Drivers of various vehicles, with wraps round their ears and their woollen caps pulled far down over the forehead, their bodies padded out for warmth, making them look immense; alert young men, with fur coats turned up behind their ears and astrachan caps pressed low on to their heads; occasional policemen, who looked like members of British Guards regiments; all these people gave a strange air to the cold streets of St. Petersburg. How cold they were I did not realise until I had been

riding five minutes in the drosky; and then I began to yearn for the warmth and comfort of the Hotel de France.

I had heard of the hotel as being a good residential place, for some of my friends had stopped there on previous occasions. You can guess with what pleasure I saw the hotel and how quickly I got out of the drosky when the driver pulled up. I burst through the double doors and asked to be allotted a room.

"Full up," was the reply, although it was not so tersely put as that. There was absolutely not an unoccupied room in the building. I turned out into the streets again, gloomily mounted the drosky, and called the name of the Hotel d'Angleterre, another place I had heard of. Off we went to the d'Angleterre, not far away. I had nerved myself to be refused here also. I was not refused.

"We are completely full till this evening," said the functionary; "but if Monsieur would care to occupy the bathroom till this evening——"

Monsieur was very glad to occupy the bathroom.

So up I went, bag and baggage, to a little room about eight feet by five feet, to make myself as comfortable as might be till the evening. The chambermaid who attended me knew neither French nor English—her only language was a

smile; but she was a most excellent chambermaid for all that. Thus began my sojourn in St. Petersburg—a sojourn which ended in much more comfortable circumstances.

I soon began to take my observations and get my bearings, because I had to be out and about at once. I paid my formal call at the British Embassy, went down to the post office, called on journalistic colleagues, and visited an Octobrist member of the Duma, and felt that I had done very well for my first day in the Russian capital.

Each day had its new experiences. There was the climate. I was in Russia at the end of January, perhaps the coldest time of the year, and a fur coat or its equivalent was essential. The cold went like a stiletto through ordinary clothing, and those of the poorer people who were not garbed in sheepskins were thickly padded. Officials such as policemen had as part of their uniform a perpendicular blanket wrapping over the neck which covered their ears up to their astrachan cap, and covering also the greater part of their faces. There was not very much walking in the streets, because travellers used droskies or sleighs in order to get to and fro the shelter of an indoor life.

The building of a house was going on, and I noticed that a huge wooden shell covered all the walls, and indeed the entire erection; and it was

in this wooden shell that the workmen were engaged, outdoor work being impossible. A good many closed motor-cars were in the streets, and lucky, I thought, were the owners who had the luxury of inside travelling during the Russian winter.

The Neva, a river somewhat wider than the Thames below London Bridge, was frozen to its winter thickness of many feet and provided on its ice passage-ways for traffic from one side to the other. The surface, of course, was not smooth ice, suitable for skating, but was rough, with the jagged pieces projecting upward here and there, a reminder of the gradual solidifying of the river at the beginning of the winter. In one part all these projections had been cleared away and lines laid down from one side to the other for the running of tramcars. In another part of the river a clearing had been made across so that sleighs might be driven from one side to the other, and at various places you could see men and women walking over the river.

There is a long embankment by the side of the Neva, and in one portion is situated a royal palace; a little way along is the Admiralty, with its graceful gilded spire; and in the other direction, still on the embankment, a great square edifice which serves for the British Embassy.

It was on the embankment that I took a snapshot of a kindly stalwart Russian policeman. He was equipped with truncheon, sword, and automatic pistol. Withal I found him a good-humoured and obliging personage, quite willing to be photographed. Here let me say that it was not possible for me to take a snapshot without some preparation, because it is an offence against the law in Russia to use a camera in the streets without an official Russian permission. To get this I had first of all to go to the British Embassy, and to secure a request to the police that I might be allowed to use a camera, together with a statement that I was a British subject known to the authorities. Armed with a letter to this effect from the Embassy I went to the chief police office of St. Petersburg, and after some little preliminary was shown into a room where a military officer at a flat-topped desk was interviewing people in turn. He was debonair and square-shouldered, in full uniform, with a row of medals across his chest, an upturned moustache, and a quick, soft voice. He took a cigarette from his lips as I handed him my documents. A glance at them and he was all courtesy, and conducted me through corridors to another department, where I was presently engaged with two other police officials. There was much scrutiny of my credentials and some private

deliberation about the matter, and presently I was given a form printed in Russian, signed and sealed, for all the world (of policemen) to see. I think I had one rouble (2*s.*) to pay. That was how I got the permission to take snapshots in the streets of St. Petersburg.

It snowed heavily on my second day, and the snow immediately took the droskies off the streets and replaced them with sleighs. Hiring a sleigh is one of those things that a stranger has to learn at an early date. The svorjik is apparently a near relative of the drivers of the public vehicles in other countries, for he is gifted with powers of bargaining and aptness of expression only to be obtained by years of service on a public conveyance, whether it is in America, England, France, or Russia. At certain parts of the thoroughfares there are drawn up by the side of the street long lines of sleighs with their drivers in readiness in pretty much the same way as cabs wait at the ranks in London. You step out to the line, and you remark, as though to yourself in a loud voice, "Gostinitza Anglia" (Hotel d'Angleterre). This means that you wish to go to the hotel. The nearest svorjik will say in Russian "Three roubles," because he sees that you are a stranger and perhaps do not know the distance or the standard of fares, or else may be a very generous or rich man.

He completely ignores the fact that the ordinary fare is half a rouble. You must not argue with the svorjik. You must keep on repeating the name of your destination as you slowly walk along. The other svorjiks, listening to their colleague, will come down, and you will be hailed with "Two roubles," "One rouble and a half." You still walk on, apparently with your thoughts bent on anything but taking a sleigh-ride, and as you get near the end of the line the last man will say appealingly, "One rouble." Then finally comes the half-sullen, half-despairing cry of "Half a rouble," and you turn back briskly, enter his sleigh, draw the rug over your hands, and suffer yourself to be whirled away.

The cold intensified after I had been in St. Petersburg a few days, and it seemed to produce a deeper silence in the streets, for there was little outdoor rattle such as one is accustomed to in London. The powdered snow had, of course, something to do with this, though a factor was the repressing rigour of the air. People went from house to house or from shop to shop hurriedly, with the idea of getting within the shelter of the double doors or double windows and in the warmth produced by the unseen fires interned in the walls.

There was nothing very elaborate in the way of shops, one reason being the fact that people could not stop in the streets to look through the

shop windows. The exception that has to be made is in regard to the flower-shops, which were magnificent. Flowers are among the delights of the wealthy Russian, and are given as presents on any excuse. In the winter they are imported from the south of France. Beautiful indeed are these shops of flowers, real oases of delight amid so much that is cold and grim and forbidding.

The day after my arrival I was invited to see the Alexander Nevski Monastery, one of the sights of the city, which covers many acres of grounds, and includes churches and a museum. I had the honour, with a colleague, of the attendance of the local superintendent of police and a monk, and very pleasant companions they were, in spite of our mutual ignorance of each other's language. I saw in the museum ancient tapestries and tokens of Russian history, including a document signed by Peter the Great. In the principal church—without chairs, because the congregation is supposed to stand throughout the carrying out of the elaborate ritual of the service—I saw the tomb of Alexander, a magnificent pile, not of sculptured stone, not of marble, but of silver. Alexander, some hundreds of years ago, was a great fighting chief, who was canonised by posterity and whose remains were conveyed from near the head of Lake Ladoga and encased in two tons of silver in the Cathedral.

The silver is to be seen by all who visit; and above it is the tiny light, which never goes out, symbolising the eternal soul.

There was another interesting church here, a church apparently not used much for service, for the very good reason that all the main portion of its floor space is occupied with modern tombs. The church is, in fact, a cemetery *de luxe*. A dead person has to be of a certain station in life before he can be buried in it, and the cost is heavy—I think it runs to about a thousand pounds.

Strange indeed is the spectacle as one enters the door. The tombs are like raised little tables, and on them all appear the lights, never allowed to go out, reminiscent of the soul of the departed, and on each table are flowers, fresh flowers, tended daily. People kneel at these beflowered and romantic tombs.

Before we left the monastery a gentle-faced bishop, with long hair, received us, welcomed us in Russian (which had to be interpreted), and gave us light refreshment in the shape of Russian tea and dainty Russian biscuits.

Let me, before I go on to describe some of the incidents of my stay, tell in a sentence or two my impressions of the Russians I encountered. Thrown among official poeple, attending official receptions, being present at society functions, I had no opportunity during my short stay of getting among the

really poor inhabitants or of learning anything of their conditions of life. But I was in no sense of the official party of visitors. I lived away from them in my own hotel and talked with educated Russians and English people, and made opportunities of intercourse with the shopkeepers and railway porters, sleigh-drivers, and others who earned their living by their hands. From informed fellow-countrymen, whose experience in the course of many years' residence in Russia had led them to know public affairs pretty thoroughly, I learnt of the famine which was devastating literally millions of people in the wide Russian continent to the East, and I learnt of the hopeless plight of these starving people and how the governing clique, nominally seeking to give relief here and there, was resolutely prohibiting the organisation of relief by private persons. Ask yourselves why! There are always State reasons to be adduced for State action of this kind.

I learnt that much of what is said about the secret police system of Russia is true; that there are intrigues within intrigues, that police bribe police, who again bribe other police, and that crimes which have shocked the world have arisen at the instigation of individuals working for the police. This is perhaps a little difficult to understand, especially in view of the fact that many

at the head of affairs are very likely honest men and able men. The ramifications of a system which encourages spies and intrigues are bound to breed traitors, bound to breed unscrupulous desperadoes with no aim but self-aggrandisement. There you have the explanation why some of those at the head of affairs suffer at the hands of tools whom they seek to employ.

The Russians are a strong physical race, tall, straight-backed, clear-eyed, with that freshness of complexion and that sturdy aspect befitting a northern people. Strangely homelike is the appearance of some of the men to an Englishman. Hospitable to the last degree, they could hardly do enough to entertain and make comfortable visitors to their country. In feasting, songs and dances, in exhibitions of horsemanship, in their displays of art and music, they strove to make happy those from this country. There was a friendliness and a frank admiration for British things which was very touching to the vanity of the English travellers. This was manifested not merely at official gatherings, but at places where the ordinary people congregated together; it was shown at a wildly-excited students' meeting at Moscow; it was shown in ordinary music-halls where I was present; it was shown by gatherings in the streets wherever British people were about.

CHAPTER X

RUSSIAN MEN AND METHODS

THE uselessness of precaution against outrage, if discontent and rebellion are such as to produce the inclination to violence, were well exemplified in a passage within my own experience, and the incident shows how an unauthorised person can obtain access to the proximity of threatened personages, however elaborated the precautions against it.

The British visitors were to be entertained at a gala performance at the Marinsky Theatre, where an elaborate ballet was to be performed, and all the fashionable society of St. Petersburg were to be assembled. Royalty was to come to the affair, and it was even expected that the Czar himself would be among the guests, and, as a consequence, for days beforehand extraordinary preparations were made by the police and the various police agents to prevent the likelihood of any kind of disaster. It was felt that enemies

might conceivably take advantage of a dramatic opportunity to demonstrate themselves. For instance, it would not be difficult for a person in the audience to throw a bomb into the royal box, and it would be a very easy matter for any one moved by murderous intent to pick off with a revolver notabilities in various parts of the auditorium. The knowledge of the possibility of such happenings made me, as the correspondent of a newspaper, particularly anxious to be present; and I accordingly did what was possible to secure admission. I experienced much difficulty. There was, of course, competition for tickets, but, quite apart from this, drawbacks existed in the decision of the authorities that no person who was not known, and whose good faith could not be relied upon, should be allowed within the precincts of the theatre. One had to be above question to obtain the sacred ticket, and a foreigner, private and unofficial, however excellent his credentials, was one of those who might reasonably be considered without the pale. Thus it came about I had a great struggle to get authority to go in, and it was only on the morning of the day of performance that I secured it by the kindness of a member of the Duma.

In the evening, after telegraphing a short dispatch to London, I took a sleigh to the Opera

House, where I found the fashionable society of St. Petersburg pouring in. My overcoat and astrachan cap being safely deposited in the cloak-room, I made my way to the entrance to the stalls, where my seat was situated. A huge Russian functionary was guarding the door. Ladies in evening dress bedecked with jewels, Russian nobles, great officials of state, were passing through in a continuous stream. I took from my breast pocket a leather letter-case containing my ticket, a narrow strip of coloured paper printed in Russian, and presented it to the man at the door, who looked at it with a little puzzlement. Reflectively he took the tickets of three or four other people who were coming in before turning his attention to me again, and I began to think that I was suspect. The man once more read my ticket, and then said something to me in Russian which, of course, I did not understand. In the calm confidence of virtue and an innocent mind I pointed to the ticket with an assumption of dignity and indicated that I had been allotted a place inside the doors. The man stared at the printed ticket, which he still held, in evident bewilderment. Then he looked me up and down, and, after a moment's hesitation, ushered me into the stalls.

Once inside I looked at my ticket to find out

the number of my seat, and to my surprise found that the ticket bore no figures. I wandered about a little, hoping to catch sight of some friend among the British party or some journalistic colleague who could enlighten me as to the system of seating. It was five minutes or so before I came across a Frenchman I knew, and in that interval I had been pretty close to the royal box and had circulated among some parts of the gathering. The Frenchman, told of my difficulty, asked for my ticket. He took it, read the Russian, and turned a smile on me.

"Ticket!" he said. "What do you think this is?"

"A ticket for the stalls," I said.

"A ticket for the stalls!" he repeated. "This is not a ticket. This is the post-office receipt for a telegram you have handed in." And so it was. The telegraphic receipt was a slip of paper similar in size and colour to the theatre ticket, and in my ignorance of the Russian language, the characters conveyed nothing to me. The receipt had lain in my pocket-case together with the ticket, and I had taken the wrong slip out at the door of the stalls. The surprise and bewilderment of the Russian janitor were easily to be understood. What he thought I meant by it I shall never be able to understand. The calm assumption with which I

indicated that this post-office receipt authorised me to enter a gala performance with royalty present at the Marinsky Theatre must have been one of the strangest experiences of his life. At this distance, I recall with joy his expression. I wonder what he made of it all? Perhaps he thought that it was just the mad freak of one of those mad Englishmen, and that such a person had to be humoured. At any rate, the fact remains that I secured admission to a gala performance at the Marinsky Theatre on the strength of a telegram receipt.

A little later I shall say something of the dancing of the ballet, but I might mention in passing that it was a thrilling performance, and that the English representatives thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The principal dancer was Mlle. Kshesinskaya, and in connection with her performances I recall an incident not without its humorous side. By some forgetfulness or some lack of understanding the usual custom of presenting a bouquet to the principal dancer was not followed, and the next morning there was a committee meeting among the visitors to deal with the lapse. It was a distinguished light of the British legislature who sent on, in the name of all, a beautiful bouquet of flowers, stating in impassioned words that he had been unable to sleep the night before for thinking of the fascinating exhibition

which he and his colleagues had witnessed. Here are the names of some of the deputation: Lord Charles Beresford, General Bethune, Lord Weardale, Mr. Peel, M.P., Mr. George Lloyd, M.P., the Bishop of Wakefield, Sir Albert Spicer, M.P., Lord Hugh Cecil, and Lord Ampthill.

I paid two visits to the Duma while it was in session, and saw the new Russian House of Commons at its work, and to one who, like myself, had spent several years in the gallery of the British Parliament, the procedure, the personal interest, and the political significance of the Russian legislature were all very telling. Every one knows the limitations of the Duma, especially in its revised form. It is but the shadow of effectiveness, it has no direct effect in government, and its indirect effect is almost negligible; yet the Duma is wonderful for Russia. It is at least the symbol of a new era. Something like the forms of representative government are by the very existence of the Duma acknowledged to the world. This is a great thing; in slow-moving, tenacious Russia it is a tremendous thing.

The Duma is housed in an old palace of Catherine II. far away from the middle of the city, and the building contains in its gardens and wide-spreading courtyard some traces of a royal residence. The wings of the old palace reach to the

pavement on each side, but the central entrance lies well back from the road. Handsome without magnificence is the Duma externally, and within there is spaciousness, blazing electric light, and some touch of splendour. Great halls, noble reception rooms, stairways designed by architects regardless of space, give to the building a semblance of regal dignity. Passing from the entrance court through three sets of glass doors necessary to keep out the cold, members and visitors yield themselves into the hands of Russian Parliamentary attendants in glittering uniforms, who strip off fur coats and snow boots with swiftness. Two attendants for each visitor is the usual allowance. The place swarms with courteous officials. A slender man, with a huge gilded breast chain, a kind of deputy assistant sergeant-at-arms, hurries hither and thither making courteous explanations in French; a bearded police chief, wearing long blue overcoat and sword, sweeps a chair or two forward for those who may be waiting for friends.

Up a spacious stairway I went to the gallery—a wide, encircling gallery, very differing from that in the British House of Commons. The impression one had was that of a magnificent hall, which was imposing by reason first of its structure, and secondly of the soft, bright light which flooded it. Beneath the gallery a fan-shaped expanse of

legislators were spread out on seats which by a semi-circular arrangement all faced the Speaker. The latter sat at a desk on a high platform. He was a big man, and when I was there was crouched over papers as though in study. Stretched out in a line to the right were the Government officials, who on occasions explain Government acts and projects.

The members on the floor ranged from the Socialists and Labour champions on the extreme left, to the arch-Conservatives on the extreme right, with the various gradations of opinion made evident by the divisions separating sections of the seats. Much of the Duma's form has been derived from the Parliamentary institutions of countries other than our own, and one misses not only the sense of Government authority, but also the concentrated force of opposition. The rigid cleavage of two great parties at home with the Speaker sitting between them helps the comprehension. There is nothing of that in the Duma. In addition a hundred different points of procedure strike the eye of the British Parliamentarian. A member does not rise in his place and speak; he walks up to a kind of pulpit just beneath and in front of the Speaker, and from it delivers his speech.

When the British party was in the House, a priest was speaking (there are many priests in the Duma), and from his impassioned tones and gestures

he might have been preaching to the gathering—and he certainly looked a very picturesque figure with his full robes and flowing long hair.

An English agenda enabled us to know the subject of discussion, and the priest's speech was on "the Report of the Legislative Motions Committee dealing with the separation of the Eastern parts of the Government of Lublin and Sedletz from the Kingdom of Poland and with the establishment of a separate Government at Chelm." Some of the sections of the legislators were in evident sympathy with the speaker's words, others sat listening with a gloomy frown, for politics are a very serious business in Russia, and the fact hits the stranger directly he goes into the Duma. These groups of strong-looking, heavy-faced men were not playing at statesmanship, but were putting into their work that kind of grim directness which leads sometimes to achievement, often to great sacrifice. This was not altered by the fact that a proportion of these men might have been seeking not the good of the State, but the forwarding of their own hatreds or their personal advantage. Among the members there were small farmers as well as the more educated townsmen. Peasants were there, I was told, but I did not see any who looked like peasants.

Because the Russians are by nature so earnest

politically or personally, their antagonism counts for much, and in the process of building up a great new Constitution those who take a hand must be prepared to find politics a business for men who will not flinch. It may in the last resort be a matter of life and death. That is part of the price to be paid in the development of a people, virile, tardy in change, but with that spirit of slow strength which leaves its mark on the centuries. The Russian race must not be judged by the published acts of cliques of temporary governors in St. Petersburg and Moscow. There are one hundred and twenty millions of Russians scattered through that vast rich country, and among them is germinating a communal spirit and aspiration which breaks out here and there, which is slowly influencing even those whose business it is to repress any new spirit, and to play the part of the tyrant.

The sense of the drama of it all was still upon one as the eye ranged that line of Government officials in the background, the men who really hold the reins of power, but who are not drawn from the elected representatives, who sit motionless, saying nothing, listening to strenuous arguments. Who could read what was behind their impassive faces? They were entrenched in silent power. Before them was spread an assembly of talkers without

power, talkers representing very imperfectly and inadequately some of the millions governed by that same line of witnesses. One day, perhaps, it will be the representative assembly which will direct the acts of the line of officials.

The customs and methods of the Duma afforded a good many variations from those to which we are accustomed. Legislators who were indifferent to a speech showed their feelings by reading newspapers or books, a very serious offence at Westminster. Mr. Lowther, could he have been present, would have shuddered at the sight. Then there was the applause, which was loud hand-clapping, discounted by some scattered hisses. There was little of our sex exclusiveness about the place, for in the roomy and comfortable gallery men and women sat together. While women journalists hold tickets for the Press gallery, women stenographers on the floor of the House produce most of the official records.

A fellow-journalist who lives in Russia was pointing out to me one or two interesting personages in the assembly and told me the name of the Speaker was Rodzianko. It was his predecessor a short while ago, said my friend, whose word on some point was disputed by a politician in the body of the Duma. A duel was promptly arranged between the Speaker and the

member, and the Speaker wounded his adversary and, to satisfy the conventionalities, was sent to a fortress. After a few days of confinement he was released and came back to the Duma, and was promptly re-elected as its president. That is the thorough and expeditious way they do things in the Russian Parliament.

The modern Englishman visiting Russia can hardly fail to feel that not only is he in a different land with a different people, but also that he is living in some other age. There is a simplicity which is rather terrible about some of the Russian modes of life. Extreme generosity, a great frankness, the highest courage on the part of the men, a bewildering charm among the best of the women, go together with habits of thought which in some directions remind one of mediæval times. Some of the prevalent conceptions as to the relations between the sexes strike the visitor as unusual, and the unscrupulousness and subtlety to be found in the police system goes side by side with a genial laxity so far as some of the smaller offences are concerned. Those who make up the bulk of the comfortable community in St. Petersburg and Moscow spend themselves in their enjoyments throughout the night until the early hours of the morning have progressed well. The restaurants do not get really busy till midnight, and it is

between twelve and one that many of the music halls, fashionable and otherwise, commence the entertainment of the twenty-four hours. Things are just warming up, as we say here, at about two in the morning.

I went into one of the restaurants with a journalist on the Nevski Prospect soon after twelve one night, and we were in the midst of supper when a stout, heavily-built man, past middle age, came in and, exchanging a smiling greeting with my friend, sat down at a neighbouring table and called for something to eat and drink. He carried genial good fellowship all over him, and at a glance I should have said he was a prosperous merchant of the city, who had made money and who led a passive, happy life, and cultivated the domestic virtues. As a matter of fact, he was a Russian general. My friend's story about him has a point of its own as illustrating the kind of atmosphere which is to be met with in Russia. This general was the governor of one of the Riga provinces during the revolution, and he was in the thick of murders, counter-murders, intrigues, and devilish strange happenings of all kinds. His particular post was amongst the most dangerous in the country. It was in the middle of the troublous times that he invited my friend to go down and spend a week with him. The journalist declined

with thanks. The governor's residence was not exactly the place for a holiday at this period. Later the general rallied my friend on his timidity, and explained the simple secret of coolness in times when a walk of fifty yards along any street brought an equal chance of a bullet or of safety. "One would die of fright," he said, "unless one persuaded one's self that an invisible bullet-proof piece of armour encircled one beneath the clothing, and that no weapon could possibly penetrate that invisible equipment. One has to be convinced that it is absolutely impossible for harm to befall one in this direction. When you have satisfied yourself of this, and not till then, you are all right." In the presence of my friend, the general had stripped off some of his clothing, and revealed the side of his body where, marking the indentations near the ribs, could be seen the healed scars of bullet passages. He had never been seriously hurt.

Well-to-do Russians eat and drink sumptuously, and there is a touch of barbaric generosity in the provision they make for visitors to their land. No trouble or expense is too much to ensure feasts which are every one of them almost regal. Curious is it to note in connection with this that at ceremonial dinners the eating and drinking are as important, even more important, than the speeches,

and at dinners I went to the serving of the courses commenced about eight, and it was between the courses that speeches were delivered, the eating itself continuing till the neighbourhood of midnight. All kinds of efforts were made to tempt the appetite. Here, for instance, is a menu of a lunch—

DEJEUNER.

Hors d'œuvre "Petersbourgeoise."
Caviar frais d'Astrakhan.
Jambonneau d'ours fumé.
Coulebiaka au véziga.
Cochon de lait au Kacha.
Consommé "Pierre-le-Grand."
Pâté Kournik.
Stoudine de sterlet "Tsarsky."
Sauce raifort.
Agneau du Caucase à la Géorgienne
Garni de gelinottes de Siberie.
Concombres malosoline.
Gelée Moscovite frappée eux mandarines.
Gâteaux Pithiviers.
Corbeilles de fruits.
Fromages.
Café et Liqueurs.
Grande Fine Champagne A 1812.

It is not nearly so elaborate as the dinner which is given at night, but does service in allaying the appetite for an hour or two. In connection with these banquets, formal and informal, there were Russian delicacies without stint—Siberian elk, partridges from Archangel, and the ever-present caviare. Wherever we went we had caviare. It

was a kind of staple dish. A distinguished member of the House of Lords was the figure in an entertaining incident in reference to the plenitude of the delicacy, for down at Moscow, noticing that it was again to the fore, he said, in conversation with a Russian near him, "I suppose the peasants of the country feed largely on this." The staggered Russian quickly pulled himself together. "No," said he, "I do not think the peasants have very much. This caviare costs a shilling an ounce." And so ended a lesson to one of our statesmen as to the conditions of life in Russia.

One of the big dinners was that given to the British visitors by the St. Petersburg municipality, and the hosts' intense admiration for the British progressive spirit was demonstrated not merely in the personal conversation of the hosts, but also in the speeches. The Mayor of St. Petersburg said: "Russian self-government, as ancient as yours, has not arrived at the same advanced stage of development. Like the Sleeping Beauty of folk lore, it awoke, full of new vigour, forty years ago, from a sleep that had lasted through many centuries. Like everything new and young that draws its strength from the maternal bosom of its native soil, it will grow and expand and blossom. But however securely, by its own inherent strength, the foundation of Russian self-government may be laid, I

have no doubt, gentlemen, that a closer relation with Great Britain—which has managed to link together the principles of individual freedom and of the common weal—to which rightly belongs the glory of being the land of self-government 'par excellence,' will be of the greatest benefit to ourselves." This drew forth many cheers—not so many, however, as the following passages from the speech of the President of the St. Petersburg City Council.

"In bidding welcome to our dear guests, I, in my capacity of representative of the Zemstvo institutions, which are chiefly concerned with the promotion of local welfare, cannot help thinking of that beautiful country, the native land of self-government, where public spirit and public order have reached their highest standard. British local self-government being the fruit of British public spirit, has succeeded in turning that wonderful country into a semblance of the Garden of Eden, the beauty of which we Continentals can only imagine in our dreams of Paradise on earth."

It was at this dinner that General Bethune, the lean, clear-eyed fighter, who is now chief of the Territorial Forces, was placed near to a local dignitary, with whom he made conversation within the restricted limits of their mutual experiences.

"I thought I was on a straight course," said the general in private afterwards, "in discussing soldierly things, and I held forth on the futility of some phases of politics. I got on famously. I pressed my point. I described politicians as, I fear, they ought not to be described. My neighbour was interested, and seemed to agree with what I said. It was only after dinner that I discovered that he was one of the principal politicians of the lot."

I have written lightly of these dinners, but one of them provided a noteworthy memory. It was not a very large dinner party, but it was certainly select. The scene was a room in a fashionable restaurant in the heart of St. Petersburg. A good many of those who were present, it is safe to say, saw nothing very dramatic in the proceedings—just an ordinary official dinner party, with some laudable speeches of good feeling from politicians and other persons of note, who had gathered together to fraternise. Yet there were thrilling elements in the room. The nearness of certain antagonistic personalities brings home a grim sensation, and this night at the restaurant near the Nevski Prospect there were personalities which had not only battled with each other, but had helped to form the life of nations, and there were present also in that

room at the same time a temporary commingling of diverse minds and impulses and outlook on life which ranged from the autocratic Middle Ages down to that of the modern democrat. In Russia such a meeting is piquant, and in ordinary circumstances might well be dangerous. On this occasion it was not dangerous, but it was nevertheless instinct with feeling.

The Imperial Council and the Duma (the Lords and Commons of Russia) had united to entertain the British party at a banquet. When one realised the bitterness, the burning ideals, the stern personal enmities with which the politics of the country are conducted, one understood the tremendous efforts which must have been exercised to get together, even for a convivial occasion, some of the warring elements. Tsar's men were here and those who opposed them, determined autocrats, and others who would fling wide the gates to popular demands. Some of those present might very probably within a week or two have the power to put others of their fellow-hosts in prison, and very certainly they would exercise that power. Miliukoff, the leader of the Constitutional Democrats, for instance, was at the same table with Dournovo, the iron-handed autocrat who governed and spared not. For this time only the enemies had met together

to give a common welcome to the British, but enemies they remained nevertheless. One of the hosts I happened to know had been in prison, and I dare say there were others.

The difficulty of organising the affair must have been immense, for some, at least, of the hosts could have had no real belief in the degree of democratic liberty enjoyed in this country, and must have regarded representative government in any shape or form not merely as a mistake, but as a childish blunder. Here are a few of the people who were present apart from those British and other people I have named: M. Witte, who has been Prime Minister, and who was one of the principals for Russia when she was arranging peace with Japan; the British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan; Rodzianko, Speaker of the Duma; General Rohberg, who, as a Russian soldier, fought against the British in the Crimea; General Bethune, whom I have mentioned before; Lord Charles Beresford, and, as I have said, Dournovo, Miliukoff, and small groups of party politicians from the Imperial Council on the one hand and the Duma on the other. It would probably have been impossible to get the gathering together at all if acknowledged Socialists or Labour men had formed a part of the assembly, but I am by no means certain they were not present,

although disguised in the political clothing of the less advanced sections. A glance along the long table gave one occasion for speculative thought of a thrilling kind. One could not help feeling that if ever the ameliorating influence of good food and good wine were called for they were on this particular evening. The man of all who particularly interested me on the human side was Dournovo, growing old now, but stern, implacable, deadly as ever. That he should have been present at all was a triumph for the tact and persuasion of those who had organised the affair, because it is certain that he had no sympathy with representative institutions such as are to be found in this country, and that any inclination to listen to the voice of the people themselves in government would have been treated by him as a species of lunacy. He probably regarded the institution of voting as an instance of modern decadence, and that the Russian Houses of Parliament should seek to honour people who had come from these more or less democratic legislative assemblies must certainly have been distasteful to him, and it can only be assumed that his desire for national Russian welfare, as he understood it, led him to be persuaded to take part in welcoming prominent men from a neighbouring great nation. At any rate, there he was. I could

only get a glimpse at him as he sat at dinner, and all I could see was a short man, with square head and dull eyes, who said little to those near him.

Conversation about Dournovo took up a good deal of the dinner so far as I was concerned, for I had on each side two well-known English journalists who had lived many years in Russia and knew Russian politics as well as it is possible for any stranger to do so. On my right was a writer, world-travelled, of high intellectual competence, and with an academic reputation. He was frankly on the side of Dournovo, strange as it may seem in one of our race. He understood the chaotic state of modern Russian politics and the need for a strong man, and urged that such a man was the one way out of difficulty and danger. "A supremely great man," he said. "Dournovo it was who put down the revolution in this country. To his strength and sureness Russia owes much." The journalist on my left was a younger man, who also was a traveller and had had opportunities of seeing the work of government as well as the life of ordinary people. In politics he is what in England would be called a moderate Conservative, and this is what he said about Dournovo: "Dournovo is the man who, in the revolution, sent hundreds to their death without mercy, and sent thousands of others

to exile in Siberia. Indeed, he did break the revolution." His subsequent description of Dournovo would shock those who heard it.

Before Dournovo got up to speak I listened to some tales about him. I heard how when in power some years ago, before the present Tsar had ascended the throne, he became aware that a member of a South American Legation was flirting with the woman to whom he was attached. Dournovo was not the man to take ordinary methods. He went to the Legation in question—and it should be remembered that Legations are technically part of the country to which they are attached—forcibly entered the place, and with his own hands broke open the desk of the secretary in question in order to find incriminating letters. This exploit, I was told, secured his dismissal by the late Tsar. That is one little episode, but it gives an idea of the kind of man. When Russia was in difficulty he was again given command, for a man like Dournovo is invaluable in a country like Russia. His subsequent course is roughly indicated by the comments I have given. His post during the revolution was that of Minister of the Interior.

The deadly hatreds which must have followed Dournovo in the space of years cannot be measured by human mind, but certain it is that time and time again he must have been within an inch of death

from those who had suffered directly or indirectly. Some few years ago the London newspapers told a story of how a woman had followed a Russian general to an hotel in Switzerland, and had there deliberately shot him dead. The tragedy of the affair lay in the fact that the woman had tracked the wrong man. She had meant to kill Dournovo. After listening to these things, it may be understood why I watched with unusual interest for the uprising of Dournovo, who had been allocated a toast in connection with the British visitors.

"What can he say?" asked my younger journalistic companion. "All the English political habits and customs must be detested by him. How can he talk even the complimentary commonplace about these English Parliamentary men? They represent all that is wrong in his eyes. He has certainly got to talk about something. His English is not very good, either."

Well, he rose presently, and at once a lull broke the after-dinner conversation. He proved to be a thickly-built, elderly man, with bent shoulders. His face was grey—marked by a close-trimmed little moustache, his forehead was flat and square, but there was nothing heavy in his features. The lines on his face showed the effect of a will power which had spared not himself; his eyes, though bright, were inexpressive, and it was evident that

a very little corner of Dournovo was ever revealed at one time to any living person.

He began to speak, and one found that he had what may be called a certain slow pleasantness, and his English, though limited, was still quite intelligible. All the gathering was expectant. Not only myself, but others also, were desirous of learning what this typical Russian autocrat would have to say about politics.

But Dournovo, behind that emotionless face, had subtlety. He disappointed us. No political pronouncement for him; no dogmatic assertion of autocratic authority; no confession that some of the democratic theories might be conceded. No, no. What, then, was his speech?

He welcomed the visitors with gravity, and said that Russians, in common with others, owed much to the English. What was it they owed particularly to the English? They owed to the English the introduction of the modern domestic novel. In this fiction writing their visitors had excelled and set an example for all the world. What greater joy was there than in the happy quietness of home, after the turmoil and fighting of the day was over, to sit and read one of these delightful, soothing, domestic English novels?

Dournovo going home to the fireside in the evening to bury himself in the tenderness of

Barrie or to laugh with W. W. Jacobs, was the picture brought before the eyes of those who knew this man of blood and steel. He seemed to mean his words. I do not think he meant to be ironic. He simply took the easiest way out.

He sat down to the usual applause. He was as impassive as ever. The gathering looked at him appreciatively. He was a man not to be understood at a glance, this Dournovo.

CHAPTER XI

MOSCOW VIGNETTES

WHO that once has seen them can forget Moscow's sweeping vistas, its irregular, wide streets, its noble buildings set in winter backgrounds of unchangeable snow? The white streets, pursuing their way by the side of ancient walls or through historic gateways, hum with the sound of swiftly-moving sleighs; great churches, fantastic, irregular, immense, with cupolas of dazzling gold, or shining, bewildering dark-blue, stand out free and isolated. You look from your hotel window across the roofs, down into the streets, upon glittering church tops to the Kremlin with its palace, its churches, and its battlemented walls, and you know that you are at the real heart of Russia and that St. Petersburg by comparison is but a cosmopolitan meeting-place.

I had the advantage in Moscow of being taken round by Dr. Dillon, the famous correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, who knows Russia and

Russian affairs with a thoroughness unusual in those who are not natives of the country. A hundred things were there to be shown, to be explained. We were passing through one of the shopping arcades when he told me the story of a famous church which was erected centuries ago by order of John the Terrible, who brought an architect from Italy to design and superintend the erection. A remarkable building was the result, and John the Terrible expressed his pleasure. "I like your building so much," said he to the architect, "that I intend to take precautions to prevent another like it being erected anywhere. I therefore propose to put out your eyes." And he did. We got into a sleigh and went to see the church in question.

The hospitality of Moscow was even more overwhelming than that of St. Petersburg. I was present at a public dinner in Moscow attended by nearly three hundred persons, at which the cost of the dinner per head was six guineas, and in the midst of the courses hosts and guests made speeches, the waiters moving about busily and somewhat noisily, irrespective of the orators. Nobody seemed to mind it much, because, after all, the dinner was the thing. The dinner was succeeded by a "rout" at the Town Hall, where there was assembled all the society and beauty of

Moscow. Dancers specially brought up from the Caucasus were performing on a little platform at one end of the hall; at the other end tables were spread with every conceivable Russian dainty, and in between, in the body of the hall, was a moving, laughing, conversing throng of fashionable Russians —ladies in evening dress, men with medals across their breasts, government magnates of all kinds, local dignitaries, and fresh-faced young officers, all mingling and fraternising with the English guests. The gathering overflowed into the corridor and the adjoining rooms. Everywhere there was ardent cordiality and a sense of exhilaration.

I am sure the British visitors enjoyed themselves greatly, and as much as any Lord Charles Beresford, who, as the typical British sailorman, was lionised continually. Of the many personal incidents it is perhaps well not to write in detail, although these incidents were all pleasant ones. For instance, would it be discreet to hint at the perfectly proper gallantry of British M.P.'s in connection with one of the prettiest girls in the room, a girl known to be the daughter of a high official, but, alas! not known to be, until late in the evening, the wife of another official?

The Russian women when beautiful are very, very beautiful. They have the gift of languages, and in educated families girls are taught English

and French from childhood up. They have a graciousness and a naturalness which are quite irresistible, and, strange as it seems, in autocratic Russia exercise a happy freedom of conversation which reminds one very much of American girls. I was introduced to a family group, and found myself almost immediately on chatting terms with one of the younger ladies. She was friendliness itself. And I had the honour, being a Britisher, of being invited to join the family in their private box at the opera gala performance on the following evening. I explained that I had already arranged to go with journalistic friends in a certain box. "Look across the theatre for us," said the lady. "As soon as you get in I will stand up, so that you can see us, then come round to our box between the acts." This was very cheery and nice, but I felt the kind offer might be somewhat difficult of execution in the presence of Moscow society. Nevertheless I kept my eyes open on the succeeding evening at the opera and almost immediately I saw the party in a box opposite. They smiled a greeting, and the girl stood up and waved her hand vigorously to indicate that I was to go round. Of course I went. "I told you I would watch for you," she said. Who, having experiences such as that, could fail to bring away with him happy impressions of the Russian women?

From the lightsome scene in the Town Hall I went out into the snowy streets, where the temperature was twenty degrees below zero, and well wrapped up in fur coat, with astrachan cap pulled down over ears, got into a sleigh with a friend and went off to visit some entertainment resorts which opened their doors about midnight. Elaborate enough are they—elaborate and expensive—and they are conducted with a freedom which would not suit even the most lax of British cities. Withal, they are perfectly respectable on the surface, at least so far as casual observation goes. At the first I went to I found seated in the auditorium at one of the little supper tables a very respectable member of Parliament. Indeed, I saw two present in the room. One of them had his wife with him.

There was little, very little, to shock the sensibilities at this first hall, and the songs being in Russian were not in any case particularly injurious to English ears. At the next place I went to, however—and the time was something approaching two in the morning—there was a good deal more freedom. I paid two shillings to go in and to have the privilege of sitting at one of the little tables in the body of the hall, where I was expected to order something in the shape of supper. The place was crowded. On the stage at the end of the hall what

might be called music-hall turns were being given for the entertainment of the eating and drinking audience.

It was at this place that there occurred a demonstration of the pro-British feeling running through the Russian cities just then. On the programme appeared the name of a dancer who was classed as an "English artiste," and this fact alone brought her more applause than that of any other performer, and at the conclusion of her song and dance she was cheered louder than ever amid many shouts for a recall. That was because she was called an "English artiste." When I say that she sang her song in bad French and was herself most obviously of German origin, it will be understood that the enthusiasm for anything English was very amply demonstrated.

Incidents of note were to be found in every hour of that few days' stay in Moscow. When we were in the Kremlin we went into the little room in which the Tsar is crowned and saw the tiny little chapel behind it in which the monarch always prays for a period before coronation. There is an Icon before the altar fixed in the wall, and in front of it a curtain is drawn. The sacredness of an icon is only to be realised by those who have visited Russia, and the feeling of the principal guide of the party may be imagined when General

Murray, one of the English guests, quite innocently stepped forward to pull back the curtain in front of the sacred emblem. Of course he was stopped before he had committed what was in the nature of sacrilege.

It was stated by one of our guides that on the altar of the little chapel Napoleon had eaten his breakfast when he was in Moscow. There are many stories about Napoleon and his stay in the capital. It is said that he alone of all notable people is the only one who has dared to go through the Saviour Gate of the Kremlin without doffing his cap to the holy icon which surmounts it. Now, as in the past, every one passing through this gateway, even in the bitterest weather, takes off his hat, and if he does not do so he will quickly find it removed for him by some passer-by. A stranger finds no excuse in ignorance, and he certainly is not allowed to be careless about the matter; and as for the Russians, the greatest as well as the humblest pays homage religiously.

One day all the party were invited to the famous Tretrakoffs picture gallery, where are kept by the City of Moscow some of the national artistic treasures. All the rooms were full of stimulation. The things I carry in my memory are war paintings by Verestchagin, and a huge and awful picture showing John the Terrible after he

had killed his son, whose injured body lies in front of him.

From the picture-gallery we went to a very different scene, a race-course outside the city. Race-course, says the reader! How could there be a race-course in winter in Moscow? Well, there is, and it is out-of-doors, too—a great semi-circular arena with all the modern appurtenances, a grand stand and the buildings and equipment necessary for the extensive ritual of racing. The contests are trotting races, not horse races in the ordinary sense, and they are trotting races which take place on the powdered snow. The speed achieved by two horses attached to a light trotting jenny as they progress is amazing, and the snow seemed to have no retarding effect at all.

I had often heard of the Russian dancing and the Russian ballet before I went to St. Petersburg and Moscow, but it had become associated in my mind with the ordinary stage dancing in this country and aroused no feeling beyond a suspicion that I should be bored when I had to go to official performances. A surprise was at hand. I went to the gala performance of the ballet at the Marinsky Theatre at St. Petersburg, and at eleven o'clock, after three hours' performance, I would willingly have watched a prolongation of the performance. Stage-dancing in this country is

quite different from that in Russia, where it is an art, and a serious art, to which years of preparation are given, and in which only those having natural gifts in addition to a long and arduous training can hope to attain eminence.

In Russia this dancing is no project cultivated for profit; it is a national possession. At the Court theatres in St. Petersburg and Moscow there are thorough and extensive State dancing schools which test boys and girls, select those who are most apt naturally and devote to them years of careful training so that they may at last take their place in the presentation of one of the national accomplishments. These schools are subsidised from Imperial funds. When the students have in their varying degrees reached the highest point in individual development they are attached either to the Marinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg or the Grand Theatre in Moscow, both of them large Imperial institutions conducted with Imperial financial support. Ballets which provide scope for practically every kind of dancing are organised on a great scale, and they are ballets of a kind unknown in England, ballets which have their life in poetry and beauty, and in which the least of those taking part has to possess the touch of an artist.

In St. Petersburg, when the British deputation

was there, a gala performance organised in their honour was not an opera, but a ballet, such a one as is beyond the dreams of Leicester Square. Not in gorgeousness did it excel, though its scenic charm was intense, but in that subtle sub-conscious appeal which springs from all true art. The performance was at once uplifting and exhilarating; one awoke next morning with its happy messages still singing in the veins. The bishops of the party were not all present; one could have wished they were, for the best of minds might have been the better for that evening's experience.

Conceive a great stage arranged for great effects with simplicity masking elaborate care. There were no gilded pillars, no glittering caves of Aladdin, but instead were gently-shaded stretches conveying the impression of open-air and spacious skies. The soft monotones ran into one another with an effect which was intensified as minutes passed, and long before the performance was over one realised that the suggestion rather than the expression in the scenes was working on the imagination and producing echoes of remembrance.

Here, then, was the framework; within was set the picture; and only those who have seen a Russian ballet can understand its drama, its

humanness, its beauty. The performers tell their tale so that he who runs may read. They put into motion the poetry of Tennyson, exquisite in form, and by its very exquisiteness giving lucidity to the argument.

A girl walked on to the stage with slow grace, and from her movements, from subtle inflexions impossible to explain, you realised that she was waiting for a man. You saw expectancy grow on her as she slowly circled round, and then you shared her exultation when she heard his footsteps in the distance.

Again you were presently startled when a dozen black-faced tumbling musicians with strange instruments burst into a courtyard; and before they had gone round the courtyard twice you were back in mediæval times, half tickled, half intoxicated with this joyous, fervid band, carrying with them old court life and the atmosphere of victorious camps. The Russian thousands roared their enthusiasm, and British generals and staid politicians cheered again and again.

But all the incidental excitement was forgotten in the finale when Mademoiselle Kshesinskaya came from the back of the stage to the footlights in a dance that put one's heart in one's mouth. She descended straight towards the audience with a movement as near flying as it is possible to

conceive in waking moments. No Englishman present will ever forget those ten seconds, and some of the audience rose to their feet, shouting wildly.

All that I have described took place at St. Petersburg, but I saw a performance no less remarkable down at Moscow, where portions of a ballet called "The Humpbacked Horse" were given intermittently with parts of an opera. It was a supreme moment when, with five thousand others in the Imperial Theatre, you saw and felt the eight dancers in the mazurka rushing madly across the great stage, rushing straight down upon you. Like the crest of a wave they came, swift-moving, irresistible, with a thousand messages in their speed and grace. They were directing their course to the spectator and to the spectator alone —that was the delusion. Fairies in a tumult of haste and determination were they, and it seemed impossible that their winged movement could be checked by the footlights. The vividness of their intention banished any thought of physical barriers. Then one drew a deep breath, for just before the front of the stage was reached the onward progress faltered, and in a twinkling the approaching wave was broken into sparkling foam. Scintillation and a thousand graces were suddenly set loose in movement so swift that no eye could follow detail,

but which told, in language delicious and unmistakable, a tale of regret, and, it may be, of promise for the future.

Can it be wondered at that the five thousand people crashed out applause, that the theatre rang with the encoring cry, "Bis, bis," and that visitors from abroad were among the ecstatic ones? There were many acts after this, each in its way extraordinarily appealing, and every tiny section of the performance brought home artistry. The grace of the performers came out of their bones. From the moment one of them appeared on the stage and proceeded to walk across it the story began to unfold itself. The girl and the man met each other, and slowly, smilingly, embraced three times. That seems a commonplace stage action. Nevertheless, it was filled with a strange fascination here. Suddenly the couple broke, with abandon, into a dance which was perfectly silent, and which told in perfect eloquence of their jubilation, trust, and love.

Throughout the ballet there were elfin movements of a thousand kinds hardly to be picked out, hardly noticeable, and yet each helping to produce the impression. Away in dreamland one had become aware that there were such movements somewhere, but did not think they belonged to the wake-a-day world. Here they were before the

eyes. It is only Mr. Barrie who would be able to write of the significance and hidden meaning of Russian dancing, for it is strongly reminiscent all the time of the land of Peter Pan.

It was impossible for an Englishman to be in Russia for even a few weeks only without being impressed with the cordiality of all classes of the people towards our race. The British nation, with its peculiar characteristics, seems to have attracted the imagination of the people of Russia. No one can look at these tall, straight-backed men, with the virility of the North, clever and strong, nor talk with the happy-faced women, not merely accomplished but filled with intensity of interest in the elements of life, without feeling that their imagination had been touched with the composite character of the British people. The practical side of our achievements in war, commerce, and literature has made a special appeal.

From this has sprung, with the development of knowledge among the people, the anxiety to learn the springs of action, of motives and inclination which have built up British doings.

This is among the educated classes—which, of course, now extend far beyond the official classes, and are continuing to extend. Beyond the ever-widening circle are millions of the poorer Russians —patient, tenacious, stoical—and these people,

clear-eyed, with the primitive endowments of strong physique, the power of endurance, the patience, which is sometimes pathetic, sometimes brutal—possessing, moreover, domestic kindliness, tremendous obstinacy—have also among them the springs of genius. Incoherent and undeveloped is this great nation of the North and East. Some day she will find herself. When that day comes it will be an epoch in the history of the world.

CHAPTER XII

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE JOURNALIST

LATTER-DAY journalism, derided as it has been, and still is in some quarters, is evolving a new type of professional man of distinctive character, who will have to be taken into account in future times by those who seek to portray the tendency of the present age. The leisurely shorthand-writer and the leisurely leader-writer, of times gone by, have developed into men who can take their part in picturing to the ever-increasing circle of newspaper readers the emotions which make up the life of rich and poor, and all those little happenings which reflect the hourly interest of men and women. Gone is the time when a newspaper could be content with the armchair reflections of editorial pundits replete with classic acquirements and moved by the knowledge that it was only the governing classes who mattered; and gone, too, is the time when a newspaper could be content for a great part of its issue with slabs of political and

other speeches, police-court reports, and by a more or less mechanical account of a circle of public events, varied by a murder.

To understand and to present the feelings of the millions of ordinary people and not merely to present the beliefs of privileged sections is part of what has come upon journalists in the last twenty years or so.

Bohemianism, geniality, and devil-may-careness have been, and are, traditional traits in those who write for the newspapers, and in varying degrees these traits have been treasured as characteristic, whether by the men whose names appeared in the papers as the authors of matter which was supposed to be contribution to the thought of the period, or by those humbler brethren to whom shorthand was the staff of support. Good fellowship, a certain disregard of the more immediate conventions, and a generosity which thought more of the needs than of the deserts of those to whom it was extended, were always treasured features in the journalistic craft. Thank goodness, they still exist and are likely to remain for many a long day. But these characteristics have been interwoven into new material, with which, indeed, they readily combine, and with which they make up a new type of man.

The spreading field of elementary education has

opened huge reading areas for newspapers undreamed of in previous generations, and this has demanded efforts in directions which would have been regarded as supererogatory by those who wrote for newspapers and produced them years ago. To-day a man must have, first of all, the qualifications of the older generation, because the groundwork of his occupation will frequently be the same, but in addition he must have a thousand differentiations. A quick understanding of the smaller emotions and the ability to tell of them is of equal importance to the power of business organisation and a smattering of diplomacy, intuition for detective work, and the literary culture of which I have spoken in a previous chapter. He must be able to give the ordinary woman reader a little glow of pleasure as she reads of the appearance of a bride in church; he must be able to write without exaggeration of the seamstress in the East End and her daily hopeless toil in a way which shall touch the casual man in the street; he must be so attuned as to be able to follow the sway of a popular orator in order to reproduce a similar influence in the written word. He must, in a word, have temperament as well as acquired knowledge. Given that temperament, it is easy to see how the work must ripen personality, for any one who is influenced by humour, or sadness, or

courage, who is brought pretty frequently in touch with these things, will inevitably show traces in his individuality.

A great school is modern journalism. In it disappear quickly a good many illusions, some of them on the soft side, a good many of them on the hard side, and on the whole there is a balance which leaves the Press worker of to-day a little sceptical, but kindly, unpretentious and full of understanding. His bitterest words will always be found for snobbery, affectation, unreality, and arrogance, and he will be kindly towards those sins which are on the generous side.

The new demands of the profession, its increased scale of pay, have naturally brought into it more men of high educational attainments, and if these are leavened by those who, with no particular formal schooling, have sought knowledge strenuously on their own account, the resulting whole is a type which, while here and there deficient in letters, is richest perhaps of all in human nature. The panorama of life which is spread before a reporter on a halfpenny paper of the day is one which might satisfy even a philosopher, and, indeed, it is hard to know of any occupation in which are more opportunities for the study of men and women, and the witnessing not merely of the general emotions which make up interest, but also

the intensified forms of them which lead to the great exaltations or the great tragedies.

What are the incidents that go to the make-up of this new type of man? They are many and various, and all carry with them special appeals. The rushing routine of the lower ranks of reporting sets moving all kinds of messages in its course, and strange little things which cannot be reproduced in print sometimes leave a lasting mark.

A busy suburban coroner has half a dozen inquests to conduct at a sitting. Grey-faced relatives in a little crowd are in the ante-room or in the coroner's court itself. Many kinds of deaths are to be investigated, some of them due to street accidents, some to drowning, some to the effect of heart disease or other insidious complaints. One of them, a common enough type, is that of the baby which has been overlain. The bodies are on the slabs in the mortuary, isolated, cold, commonplace, and terrible. Silently, in single file, the jurymen and relatives pass by, and presently the young mother, with handkerchief to her mouth, comes along and catches sight of her child. Surprise overwhelms her. "It is my baby," she screams. Death is horribly new to her. She has nursed to her bosom so often that little mite now cold and helpless, no more to have life. The burly

coroner's officer, with kindly manner, supports her out of the mortuary.

A few years ago a boat-train travelling one night to Waterloo crashed off the line at Salisbury, killing many passengers, injuring many more, and reducing the train itself to a chaos of bent iron and broken woodwork. Those of us who hurried down reached Salisbury while the work of rescue from the tangled masses was still going on, but it was the rescue of the dead, for there were no living left beneath the wreck. Horror walked the streets of Salisbury that day, and it was hardly lightened by the streaks of heroism and fortitude which came to light with every hour. The bigness of the catastrophe blurs the picture somewhat even at this time, and yet from the day of shock and misery one incident stands out in my memory. Many of the passengers were Americans, and there were some family parties among them. Some of the groups were killed outright, and in other cases individuals escaped practically unhurt. Standing in the Salisbury Post Office to dispatch a telegraphic message, I waited at the counter for a minute by the side of a girl of fifteen, who was quite calm although her face was white. She was alone in England now, because her people had gone. I could hardly help seeing the telegraphic message she wrote out for an address in

Washington. This was it as far as I remember: "Father, mother, and aunt, all dead. Tell me what to do." Twenty-four hours before that this girl must have been joyfully chattering with her friends about the English holiday which was just beginning.

The journalists who were present carried in their minds for a long time the scene when Mr. Balfour, then the Prime Minister, received at the Foreign Office a deputation of poor women from the East End brought by Mr. Will Crooks and others for the purpose of laying their grievances before the Government. I forget the actual object of the deputation, but it had to do with poverty and it had to do with suffering, and sought help from the authorities. I can see that gathering of women now in the great, dignified room of the Foreign Office while their spokesmen put the case before the Minister and some of his colleagues. There was the usual official refusal to do anything, gracefully made by Mr. Balfour, just as uncompromising as though it had been hurled at the women with violent adjectives. Dull and expressionless were all these faces as they filed out, and it was not until some of us mixed with them afterwards that we knew that these women had been in some cases without food entirely for twenty-four hours, and in others had had a sum of twopence or threepence to provide food for a family

of four or five for three days, and in still other cases had, through their working conditions, been compelled to try to get sustenance for weeks past on money which did not average a halfpenny a head per day. No wonder they were silent and apathetic. It occurred to one that the gracefulness of Mr. Balfour's refusal must have been thrown away. I have no doubt that the soundest economic reasons could be adduced for the refusal to accede to the requests put forward on behalf of these hungry families, but I have often thought that if Mr. Balfour had by chance known the hungry condition of the women listening to him he would not have made the reply he did, for he is a man easily to be touched by noble sentiment, and courageous in doing what he considers to be right. Mr. Balfour went back from the Foreign Office to his official residence at 10, Downing Street. Mr. Crooks took the hungry women over to Lyons' Restaurant in Parliament Street, where, by the help of some friends, they were given a good, substantial meal for once. Not one of us who was there but could have wished that some of the Ministers of State might have been present during that meal and heard the women talking.

Of the lessons to be learnt from the clash of strong personalities there is no end for the journalist with a seeing eye, and they could be multiplied

without ceasing. Think of the time when in the last Conservative Government the struggle was going on between leaders who held opposing views on tariff questions, each striving to secure power and dominance, and at the same time preserving to the outer world that appearance of general agreement which is part of the cloak of politics.

There was piquancy and drama in the situation when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and the late Duke of Devonshire appeared at an afternoon meeting to speak to their supporters from the same platform, each to uphold his own opinion, and while preserving the appearance of friendly co-operation, each to show that his, and his only, was the way of salvation. Every one present knew the situation, in spite of all the civilities. I remember well the ponderous, ungainly, slow-voiced Duke of Devonshire, whose very clumsiness of appearance and of speech added to the impression of sincerity given by his actual words. No agility of mind was there, no lightning phrases, only a steadfast, immovable, rock-like temperament, against which the storm of rival opinion might break in vain. Withal, in these heavy sentences there was much tact, because he seemed to imply that all was really well between him and Mr. Chamberlain, in spite of passing inflections of judgment. Grim-faced, alert, motionless,

sat Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, his spare body, sharp features, his young-man air all producing the effect, even as he sat very motionless, of a person of action, ruthless and determined. When he rose to speak he gave life to the picture, and those biting, clear-cut phrases, so terribly lucid in their intent, meant war with the Duke. All the gathering knew that these two were antagonists, that each was set on his own way, and that their differing points of view were entirely irreconcilable. One had to conquer, one had to give way. Which was to be the victor? The friendly attitude in front of others, and, indeed, probably demonstrated when by themselves, was part of the drama. In combat were these two individualities, and while they knew it themselves, and everybody else knew it, they did not acknowledge it openly, at least, and went on their way with simple compliments and expressions of mutual regard.

In the newspaper calling, with all its strenuous calls on quick decision, its stern competition for speed and exclusiveness, its temptations to alert minds, there is, I am quite sure, a degree of professional honour unsurpassed among any body of men in the world. The humanness of their experience, the very laxity with regard to some of the sterner conventions, help to rigidness in matters particularly affecting their work. Men of the world

are currently supposed to be not very particular in certain directions, and the modern journalist is essentially a man of the world, but, notwithstanding this, there is a code unwritten, unspoken, which rules absolutely the conduct of individuals engaged in the wide operations of newspaperland. Tactful must be the successful journalist of to-day. It is well that he should be fluent, for if he can tell a good story he is on the way to being an irresistible man; and it will come as a surprise to many who spend a good deal of effort in opposing the call for newspaper information to learn that the newspaper man is among the most reticent and reserved of people. He will talk a good deal, because it is often his business to do so, but you will find that he rarely reveals anything that can be called a piece of news. What is more important, he can be absolutely trusted with a secret. He will not disclose it to any person, and farthest of all from his mind will be the thought of publishing it in his paper. Scores of public men can bear witness to the discretion of Pressmen, can testify to their good feeling and their scrupulousness. Time and time again, a Pressman's personal interest would be served by a little yielding on matters he has heard in conversation or topics which have been discussed with him by those in a position to know the facts. He does not yield. There is more than one man

in Fleet Street to-day who has carried things in his mind—personal news, political news, Court news, which would have given his paper a boom, and helped him some way on the ladder of success. The news has remained unpublished. So rarely is there a breach of this rule that the cases are negligible. Sometimes, of course, a breach of confidence would in the long run tell against the journalist, but, quite apart from this, there is the sternest observation of all that makes for professional etiquette and honour. Nor is this trait confined to individuals, for the newspapers themselves—differing in influence, differing in their views as to what is for the common weal—have, I think, all of them, without exception, the same scrupulous regard for the niceties of newspaper honour. Journals opposed to the Government of the day have had in their keeping Government secrets which they could not well publish without breaches of faith; and this applies to Conservative journals and Liberal journals alike. The news agencies, ever the most alert for Government information, frequently become possessed of startling items which, for reasons connected with the public welfare, are never given to the world, although they would make fascinating reading for the man in the street.

All these things have their bearing on the journalist of to-day, and they reflect the influences

which are to be found in his daily work. There is an attitude towards life in it all—an attitude which may be liable to criticism, but which, at any rate, is fresh and untrammelled.

Seriousness and lightsomeness flit before the journalist's eyes, and to cultivate a brave frivolity is one of the first things to learn. There are any amount of object-lessons by the way, and he must be prepared to throw himself wholeheartedly into trifles as well as to meet the problems of State with fitting decorum. Perhaps it is to be regretted that journalists have not much respect for the respected in a good many directions, but in defence let it be said that if they cultivated deferences they would be at a loss in dealing with the many problems which are thrust upon them from day to day.

The lesser qualities—concerned with readiness of mind and a constant placid sense of humour—cannot fail to be developed by the new conditions, although these things have always in some measure been bred by the work of journalism. Opportunities in the higher flights for a grave audacity will continually be opened up. There are any amount of stories which illustrate the prevalent spirit. Some of them are inconsiderable; most of them demonstrate a much-to-be-criticised disregard of authority and a pleasant, new outlook.

Who will be likely to forget the story of two Irish reporters who ought to have attended a cathedral service one morning in order to hear a special sermon by a visiting bishop, and who found attraction elsewhere and failed to arrive till the sermon was at its end? They were frankly in difficulty because their respective papers had sent them from a considerable distance to report the bishop. How could they get the sermon? There was no one in the cathedral to whom they could apply, and after discussing the matter for some time they determined to take the bold step and go to the bishop himself. He could but repulse them, and it was well worth the trial. So at the conclusion of the service they went to him, and with some hesitation one of them explained the situation. Would the bishop mind dictating part of the sermon? The bishop was an Irishman, and he met their request generously. He would, he said, to oblige the reporter, go so far as to write out some of his sermon. This kindliness brought forth a stream of thanks, for it was at once recognised that the bishop was going to great trouble and was condescending very much.

"I'll write out half a column for you," said the prelate. The kindness would have overwhelmed any but a Pressman, and perhaps would have overwhelmed even him if he had not been an Irish

Pressman. The second reporter, who had not spoken, but who had heard the dialogue between his colleague and the bishop, was faced with the fact that he might have to write afresh the half-column since the bishop's contribution would only provide one copy. "Perhaps," he said, "in writing it out you would not mind putting in a black?"

A "black," it should be explained, is a carbon which duplicates the writing. I am not quite sure what the bishop did about it.

Then there was my friend, Mr. Perks, not only a clever journalist, but one of the finest raconteurs known in Fleet Street. If ever Mr. Perks could be persuaded to write his reminiscences they would indeed make a fascinating book. He was once somewhere up in Lincolnshire with some colleagues during an election fight in which his namesake, Mr. R. W. Perks, was a leading figure. One evening, it is reported, a small deputation of local dignitaries arrived at the hotel where Mr. Perks, the journalist, and Mr. Perks, the politician, were both staying. They asked for Mr. Perks, because they wished to lay their views on some matter before him. They were shown into the waiting-room where Mr. Perks, the journalist, and some of his colleagues were at work, and Mr. Perks, rising to the occasion, welcomed them gracefully, and asked them to state their object. The deputation

responded by putting forth their needs on a certain matter, and Mr. Perks, in response, said that, of course, he was well aware of the importance of the case put forward by the deputation, and was not unfamiliar with the weight which should be attached to the arguments. In the course of public life he had met many who held their views, and although at that moment he could not pronounce definitely upon them, he would give them the utmost consideration, and would not fail to explain the circumstances to his colleagues when he returned to the House of Commons.

The gratitude of the deputation to Mr. Perks for his kindly reception is said to have been touching. The political namesake of the journalist, now Sir R. W. Perks, laughed heartily when he heard of the incident, and a long time afterwards he chaffingly declared to Mr. Perks, the journalist, that he had never been able to convince some of his constituents that he had not committed himself definitely and irrevocably to the Agricultural Rating Act or some other Act.

In face of the protests against what is called sensationalism and the unscrupulous methods of popular papers of to-day, it is permissible to point out that much consideration is shown daily for the feelings of individuals by journalists, who might well give publicity to unpleasing facts

within their knowledge. The printing of a good deal of interesting news is, I dare say, very painful in the quarters concerned, but that is inevitable if you accept the proposition that news dealing with persons as distinct from policies should be inserted in the papers at all. And it is really remarkable how many of the cases in which objection is taken to publicity are connected with occasions which are properly susceptible of public comment of a criticising nature. Sensitiveness springs in the majority of cases, not from a sense of abstract propriety, but from the knowledge that there will be little revelations which would throw an unpleasant light on those concerned. I am certain, moreover, that no fair-minded person will say that personal journalism in this country is carried to unwarranted lengths, or is, on the whole, illiberal or rancorous. Once in a way, perhaps, there is an outburst on the part of a paper which is not justifiable, but matters soon right themselves, the balance is restored, and, generally speaking, a high level is maintained.

It may be added that the newer journalists have come to realise the abiding interest to be found in the descriptions of human personality, an interest pressed home for centuries by the great writers in respect of great men. Now, with the enormously-widened field of people who read not

only books, but newspapers, the interpretation of current personalities, often of the lesser personalities who come up and are forgotten in a month, has been utilised and will be still more utilised. Of course, the modern tendency is open to abuse, but I do not think that it is very often abused in this country. And in the thick of all the claims of the new profession it is certainly remarkable how much kindness is forthcoming in connection with matters which are never known to the public at large. An illustration was given quite recently in what was known as the "Hooded Man" murder, where a condemned prisoner used a false name, a name which was not printed by the newspapers, although they knew who he really was; and this reticence was entirely on behalf of his father and mother, who are respectable people, and whose lamentable plight was easily to be understood. Suppression may also have its excesses, but there is little fear of extremes in this direction, because in pretty well all cases newspapers are acting against their business interests in keeping live personal news out of their columns.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STORY OF LORD NORTHCLIFFE

ALFRED HARMSWORTH was the dominating name among workaday journalists of Fleet Street within a few years of the *Daily Mail* initiation, and it was a name which was very generally spoken ill of by journalists. All kinds of expressions were called forth by the mention of this young man, who had already made his new halfpenny paper into a success. That he should have had such small beginnings ruffled some of the older and more responsible men in Fleet Street; that he should employ young men and ask them to do new kind of work in journalism annoyed a good many of those who had passed their apprenticeship days; and the fact that he paid salaries far in advance of conventional newspaper salaries gave an added touch of bitterness to the general resentment. All this was quite apart from the political hostility aroused by the *Daily Mail*.

The readiness with which men were engaged and given their chance by Alfred Harmsworth was only equalled by the readiness with which they were discharged when they were found unsuitable for the work required, and this accounted for a good deal of the antagonism. Tales were abroad of men who had been lured from the provinces and cast adrift after a few months. "He sucks people's brains and then throws them aside," was a phrase freely used. The *Daily Mail* itself was spoken of with disgust. The "office-boy's paper" was how it was described by journalists on both sides in politics who were connected with old-established papers. And yet, in spite of all this, some of the younger spirits in Fleet Street cherished in secret an ambition to get on the staff of the *Daily Mail* and have their chance with new men and new methods. Some of them who were engaged found happiness in the new strenuousness, and achieved a success which would have been impossible anywhere else. Others encountering the merciless fluctuations inseparable from a rushing business went down. On the whole the able men, who by temperament were fitted for the life, found permanency, and those who were by temperament unfitted, whether they were capable or not, soon left of their own accord, or were fired out.

In a few years Alfred Harmsworth had made himself proprietor of several newspapers, daily and evening, and a large number of weekly magazines and kindred papers; a colossal fortune was passing through his hands each week, and an army of men was under his control. Even then many of the working journalists on the highly-respectable morning papers affected to shudder at the mere name of Alfred Harmsworth. "Wouldn't go on the *Daily Mail* for twice the money I'm getting," was the usual comment. "There one month and gone the next." Contemptuous references to the contents of the paper and the temporariness of its popularity were commonplaces. Withal, the name of Harmsworth began to be of import in Fleet Street, and astonishment grew up by the side of resentment. Even against their will, old-fashioned sub-editors and reporters realised that there was a great new force in newspaperland. All this is as much as ten years ago.

It was six months after I joined the *Daily Mail* that, sitting in the reporters' room one day at work at my writing-table, I was disturbed by the opening of the door and the thrusting in of a boyish-looking face, clean-shaven, with tawny hair falling over a square forehead, a keen, inquisitive look about the eyes. The face was withdrawn almost instantly, and the door closed.

That was my first glimpse of Alfred Harmsworth. He had a habit once and again of popping into the various departmental rooms of his paper to see the faces of his new men. Generally he would speak to them. Sometimes, as in my case, he would content himself with a passing glance—though he would take care to acquaint himself quickly as to the man who had just been under his silent scrutiny.

People ask one what Alfred Harmsworth is like to look at. He is a little difficult to describe, because no outline of the personal appearance could produce the effect of the magnetism which emanates from him, and which affects in a greater or lesser degree all those with whom he comes in touch. Picture a squarely-built man, heavy in the shoulders, who always walks quickly with short steps, a man with a head at once massive and boyish, with a great square forehead, over which a lock of hair drops pendulously—Bismarckian chin, a big mouth which sinks at the corners, an aquiline, well-formed nose, and widely opened eyes, which hide thoughts and passions instead of reflecting them. There he is externally. Yet the description conveys little. It is mood which transforms the man. At all times energy flickers from him like lightning, but nevertheless he is an entirely different man

on different occasions. See him in attack. Head sunk deep in the shoulders, brows lowered, he scatters nimble words which sear and burn in their destructive intent. With all the avidity and eagerness of a schoolboy, he pours forth truths which never fail to wound, to scarify, or to destroy. Ruthless and merciless is he. He can break a man's spirit or subdue a bully with marvellous celerity. He can scatter an insincere nuisance, blow to pieces a bit of clever bluff with unfailing and unkindly thoroughness. There is youthfulness in all, almost childishness at times, and yet also a ferocious intent which never fails.

Is it possible for the reader to reconcile this picture with the fact that Alfred Harmsworth has inspired his servants, not merely with enthusiasm, but with devotion, and that most of those who have been in closest relation with him have felt the touch of affection?

His presence did not bring so much restraint among the irresponsibles of the reporters' room as did that of the departmental chiefs—and these shuddered (figuratively) at his lightest word. Alfred Harmsworth would come bustling in amongst the reporters once in a way with a hail-fellow-well-met word for everybody. He used to smoke big flat cigarettes; but he always seemed to smoke them with an effort. I remember one day,

years ago, he came in on one of those genial calls, and walked over to the green baize notice-board above the fireplace whereon were placed the various announcements from the news editor—announcements which were interspersed with lightning cartoons and irreverent comments. Alfred Harmsworth found on the notice-board a pencil caricature of himself, done by one of the men who then sat in the room. "Who has been libelling me?" he said. Dead silence. There was a twinkle in his eye. A reporter arose and walked over to the notice-board, and looked at the notice-board with marked surprise as though the caricature was a fresh thing to him. "Dear me," said he.

"Who did it?"

"Well, I really——" began the reporter.

"Lend me your pencil," said Alfred Harmsworth, quickly, and he wrote beneath the drawing: "Please do not libel me.—A. C. H." He left it at that. I am quite certain he was aware the man who drew the caricature was in the room.

One of the things that struck me from the first was the fact that Alfred Harmsworth gloried in putting from him the little pretensions to deep-seated reflection and calculation of great issues, which lesser men parade. He was not afraid to seem youthful; nor was he afraid to think out

aloud. This was unpleasant sometimes, but at other times it was refreshing. He took the greatest pains to talk to the least of his men on level terms. Perhaps this was cultivated; but in any case it arose from a natural gift; and he had a pleasant frankness which was captivating to the younger members of the staff. About a year after I joined the *Daily Mail*, in my anxiety to get a good story for the paper, I was badly hoaxed by some jokers, who told me a long, exaggerated tale of the happenings at one of our old Universities, those happenings having only scanty foundations in fact. I seized on the narration, wrote it up, and it appeared in the full glory of a prominent column in the paper. Denial and laughter descended upon the paper. I was mercilessly chaffed by my colleagues, but, more than that, I was seriously rated by my chiefs, because it is one of the deadly sins of Fleet Street to let one's paper down. My mistake was just one of those things which might easily annoy a proprietor more than a graver lapse. It was on the second day after my downfall, when feeling a little sullen after my buffeting, I was going up to Carmelite House, and in Tallis Street met Lord Northcliffe in a motor-car. He pulled up, as he saw me, to speak to me on the pavement. I prepared to receive cavalry. Conceive my feelings when he said very cheerily, "They pulled your leg,

did they? Don't you bother about it. We have all had our little mishaps of that kind. I have suffered, too. Don't you let this worry you." And off he went.

Those who were immediately associated with the work had a trying and exciting time, for it is very few who have the vitality to keep pace with a man like Alfred Harmsworth. Sometimes he did not realise this; sometimes he did. A hundred stories are afloat in Fleet Street about him. There was, it is said, a member of the staff who had been acting as his private secretary, and he was getting very fatigued with the work. Alfred Harmsworth looked at him one morning, glared, and said: "You are run down. You are not well. You must have a holiday." The man muttered that he would be able to get along all right. Alfred Harmsworth refused to be contradicted. "You want a holiday," he said fiercely, "and you've got to have it. Take six weeks off at once. Go to-day." Stammering, the man protested he did not want a holiday. "I know what it is," said the chief, sternly, "you've got no money to go away with. That's what is the matter. Don't tell me. I know what it is. Very well; here's a cheque. Now go off, and rest yourself for six weeks."

All those who have been connected with the firm for any length of time can give instances of

extraordinary generosity exercised with a certain fierce privacy.

It would be wrong, however, to imagine he was the kindly, beneficent father of the establishment; he was uncompromising where incapacity was concerned, and frankly he revealed the fact that he could not suffer failures gladly.

An indication of the spirit which follows in the trail of Alfred Harmsworth may be gathered from the many more or less apocryphal stories which hover round him. Here is a sample: He met a sub-editor in the corridor, and, in accordance with occasional practice, stopped him for a few words of conversation.

"How are you getting on?" he asked.

"Excellently, thanks."

"Perfectly comfortable in the sub-editors' room?"

"Yes, quite."

"How long have you been with me?"

"About three months now."

"Do you find it easy to work with the chief sub-editor?"

"Yes, I like him very much."

"What money are you getting?"

"Five pounds a week."

"And you are quite happy and contented?"

"Yes."

"Then you are not the man for me. I don't

want any member of my staff to be happy and contented with five pounds a week."

I have seen Alfred Harmsworth in many moods, in many circumstances, and have worked directly or indirectly under his control for ten years, and he remains to me, as I dare say to many others, almost the same bewildering personality as at the beginning. Measure some individual action of Alfred Harmsworth by ordinary standards, and you may get near enough to understand him, or think you understand him. Take one section of his work, and his methods of carrying it out, and you may be able to get a comprehension of his line of thought and impulse; but take the man as a whole and he puzzles and staggers one. Elusive as the winds of summer are his motives. Men of simple mind struggle in vain to gather the impulses which drive him to various courses of action. They will struggle so to the end of the chapter.

Who can account for his amazing success in business? By the genius of his own brain and his genius for bringing the intellect of others to his service he has amassed a fortune well beyond the dreams of ordinary avariciousness. Anything he has touched from his youth always has seemed to turn to gold. Courage is his, energy is his, shrewdness is his, imagination is his. But

all these things have been combined in others, perhaps in equal measure, but with a total failure to produce similar results. Wherein lies the secret? When that has been discovered one of the problems of human personality will have been solved.

Was it wealth Alfred Harmsworth sought? For many years past he has been, if not the richest man in this country, at least very near it, and he still continues on his turbulent way, making newspapers, disturbing countries, building up men's reputations and breaking them.

Was it power he sought? For many years past he has controlled the greatest newspaper trust in existence—daily papers, weekly papers, provincial papers, serious reviews, humorous journals, popular magazines. Probably never in the history of the world has one man been given the power of influencing so many minds as Alfred Harmsworth. Still, withal, he continues to make fresh departures, to initiate new ventures, to build up great businesses abroad as well as at home.

Was it fame he sought? Possessing immense wealth, holding high social position, having it in his power, by means of his network of journals, to reach the minds of not less than twenty millions of people each week, he has in his grasp the greatest instrument for personal notoriety ever given to a man in modern times. He can make the fortune

of an artist or an author by a single instruction, by a word of command. He could go far in the direction of producing war between two nations. He has the power to stop a war. Notwithstanding this, he remains, of all the notabilities, perhaps the least known personally to the public; the least talked of personally, the least regarded as a serious personal force. No, it could not have been fame he sought.

There is the enigma for you.

Like a meteor, he bursts across the political sky, sometimes denouncing his nominal political foes, at other times scourging his nominal political friends. Sometimes he fails; on the whole he succeeds. His success is a great rushing river, checked here and there from time to time, but always progressing and gathering momentum as it goes along.

Who can tell what have been and what are his ambitions? The joys of country life are one, I think. He has a beautiful old Elizabethan mansion near Guildford, the gardens of which are a pure delight to the nature lover. He has another place at Broadstairs, from which he took his title when he was made a peer. He likes to be the host of people, and a fascinating host he is—not merely to fashionable folk, but to all that great multitude of people to whom, in common phrase, he "takes a fancy." Members of his staff are frequently

entertained by him at one or other of his country houses.

Who would think that such an agreeable, understanding man, so quick to grasp the meaning and sympathise with the intentions of an ordinary mind, would ever become a terror? Yet opinions of Alfred Harmsworth have only to be formed to be broken on any lengthy association with him. That is the tantalising part of the matter. At one time you are prepared to swear that he is a cynical genius, who enters into the mind and heart of his associates with the deliberate intent of extracting from them all that may be put to material use; and then, after a day or two's association, you realise you have wronged the man very much, and that at least one part of him is intensely human, kind, and generous to the last degree. Perhaps he is in reality one of those occasional beings who have six souls and six intelligences to match. Some swift combination of circumstances may bring to the fore any one of those six personalities. Behind each personality is a devastating, forceful energy. That forceful energy is directed often by an intuition comparable only in its accuracy to that of a woman. He sees things, and he knows not why he sees them.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE OF REPORTING

It was as a young and ardent reporter in one of the London suburbs during election time that I had my first physical tussle to secure the interests of my employers.

Competition with regard to election results is intense, and the gain of half a minute in the announcement is a matter of congratulation and elation in the agency office which is fortunate enough to be in front. Preparations are made to save every second. At the various telephones of the Fleet Street headquarters are stationed men to take down instantly the figures transmitted to them, and near at hand are operators at the electric typewriting instruments which set in action the tape machines in all the newspaper offices and the clubs.

I went down to the suburb, and found at the town hall seven or eight newspaper men all bent on getting the figures first. The difficulties were

considerable, because the telephone room of the municipal offices was the best part of a hundred yards distant from the Town Hall, where the counting of the votes was to be done. This hundred yards of corridors and stairs presented problems. I had taken the precaution of obtaining from the town clerk permission to use the municipal telephone, but I knew perfectly well that authorisations of this kind are apt to count for nought in the struggle for precedence at the final moment, and in the circumstances I came to an arrangement with a friend who, like myself, represented an agency, and we struck up a working coalition against the other men. This was necessary, because one agency had a force of three reporters present. The arrangement was that we should work together: that I should telephone the figures first to my agency, and then help my friend to the next call of the telephone, so that although second to me he should be in front of all others. We went to the official who was actually in charge of the telephone room, explained the circumstances to him, and secured his endorsement of our plans. Alas! for human frailty. In the waiting hours during the counting we, like other Pressmen, wandered about the municipal buildings, and this, as we subsequently found out, gave plenty of opportunity to our opponents to get at the man at

the telephone and to enlist him against us by means of inducements which even to this day remain a mystery.

We were ignorant of this counter arrangement. We waited midway along the corridor as the fateful moment for the result approached, and as the doors of the counting room swept open and candidates and officials burst forth towards the balcony, my friend started running downstairs to the telephone room to ring up my number. I got the figures and I dashed along and overtook him at the door of the telephone room. Try to understand our feelings at witnessing the municipal official ringing up on the telephone, not for us, but for our rivals. It was no time for hesitancy. My friend flung himself on the municipal official, while I tried to keep back the oncoming rush of Pressmen in the doorway. I was borne forward. My friend was struggling, and I shall always remember the picture of that municipal official with the telephone receiver in one hand trying to strike and push away his assailant with the other. I ran to help, wrested the telephone receiver from the official, pressed myself up against the telephone instrument, and called the exchange.

The room was half-filled by this time with people desiring to get on the telephone, journalists being in front, municipal dignitaries behind. The

official was still struggling in the grip of my friend to get at me, but in the midst of the turmoil I obtained my number. While I was dictating the figures somebody caught me round the waist and tried to jerk me away. I clung to the telephone fixture determinedly, and the whole case came off in my arms. I could hear my friend using violent words, while he struggled with all and sundry in his efforts to protect me and the telephone. I jammed on the wooden case again and succeeded under extraordinary difficulties in getting my friend's number and sending the figures over to his agency.

Next day I read with interest paragraphs in some of the newspapers about disgraceful scenes at the town hall.

While I am on journalistic election stories let me recall the misadventure of one of the wittiest and most popular of Fleet Street reporters at a by-election, the Thanet election, when Mr. Harry Marks was returned. The declaration was to be at mid-day, and elaborate plans were made by the various reporters to secure the first transmission of the figures to London, and the Pressman in question, to whom the result was of particular importance, inasmuch as he represented a great agency which would send the figures broadcast to all the provincial papers as well as into London offices, evolved a complex scheme,

including relays of messengers between the Town Hall and the post office on the one hand, and the Town Hall and the telephone office on the other, and a code of signals by which he could give a warning from the balcony that the result was coming, and an arrangement by which at the last moment he was to write the figures on a little wooden tablet and fling it down into the crowd to one of his confrères to get it off by these various channels of communication.

To appreciate the situation you have to hear this Pressman describe the thoroughness and elaborateness of his plans, how he schemed to out-distance all competitors, and how it was simply impossible for him to be beaten at the time of the announcement. "All went well," says he, in relating the story; "the boys were in position underneath; there was a man at the post office waiting to rush it over the counter; there was a man stationed at the telephone-box in another place ringing up London and putting through calls so as to be ready for the great moment; there was the other fellow underneath in the crowd waiting for the slip of wood to be thrown down—all the beautiful organisation waiting for my efforts.

"As for me, I had to get the figures first, and having got them first to throw them down to the reporter below. I made tremendous efforts.

I actually got the figures a few seconds before other people. I wrote them down. I flung them to my friend in the crowd. The great organisation worked beautifully. Away went the news, not merely to London, but to Manchester, Newcastle, Glasgow, Dublin, Birmingham, and other towns in the kingdom. I beat everybody. Yes, I got the result off first, my lad, and I got it off wrong. I had reversed the figures."

I think one of the most startling of my experiences, though not a very serious one as it happened, occurred one night when I was travelling between Paris and Marseilles. There had been the usual stop at Dijon, with that wonderfully quick meal, as appetising as swift, in the long refreshment room in the station; and after this I had covered myself up in the corner of the carriage preparing to sleep as well as might be until the Mediterranean came within sight. The train was comfortable, and I dozed intermittently for hours. I must have been in a light sleep between one and two in the morning, when I was awakened by a terrific jar, which shook me up considerably, and threw another passenger off the seat. It was a continuing shock, the train vibrating strangely, quivering as though under a succession of giant blows, while a groaning, crashing noise went on through all.

One had just time to see through the window another train passing us at a high rate of speed, and then we began to slow down. It was pretty obvious that in some way we had escaped an accident, but what was the cause of the whole disturbance was a mystery to the shaken and sleepy passengers. The express came to a standstill, and very soon railway officials, with lanterns, were running up and down the line inspecting the sides of the carriages, which were battered here and there in a strangely irregular way. Presently the whole thing was explained, and the explanation showed how close had been the shave.

The train passing ours had a truck laden with barrels, and just at the moment when the two expresses were passing one another one of these barrels had been jolted off between the two trains, and had been carried along between them, crumpling itself in the passage, but shaking and disturbing and battering the carriages which were carrying it along. We remained awake after this and watched the dawn, and waited for the first glimpse of the Mediterranean.

Many and various are the parts a journalist is called upon to play in the course of a varied occupation, and sometimes he has extraordinary responsibilities thrust upon him. During the

reign of Queen Victoria, when some royalties and distinguished notabilities from abroad were visiting this country for ceremonial purposes, I was calling daily at Buckingham Palace to see one or other of the equerries with regard to news which might be published. And one day, when the Court was at Windsor, I was asked into a spacious and ornate room at the palace for a little conversation with a particular equerry. He was, it appeared, in close touch with the private secretaries at Windsor, and in telegraphic communication about the programme of events in connection with the royal visitors. One special occasion was in his mind this morning, and it was about this that he desired to see me. Picture, therefore, a twenty-five-years-old reporter, eager for news, and picture also a dignified and elderly courtier who desired to consult with him. We discussed matters in general, and I learnt what I could publish in reference to current happenings, and then the equerry asked me for advice on a special point. It was proposed that her Majesty should give a dinner party on Sunday to the distinguished visitors. The gathering would be of a very elaborate kind, something in the nature of a State function, and the question was whether such a gathering would offend public susceptibilities. Would it be right in this country, in the eyes of

the public, for such a dinner party to take place on a Sunday? What would people generally think about the matter?

The observance of national conventions is an early duty of constitutional monarchs, and it seemed there was some doubt in the minds of those responsible as to what ought to be done in regard to this Sunday dinner party. There was no hesitancy in my mind as to how it would be regarded, for I was certain it would have offended a great many sections of people who were altogether opposed to Continental innovations with regard to Sunday, and I told the equerry what I thought. He was disposed to agree with me. It was with a touch of early reportorial vanity I learnt a day or two later that the Sunday dinner party was not to take place.

One of the incidents on the human side within my experience was in connection with Miss Violet Charlesworth, who a year or two ago achieved so much notoriety by reason of a dramatic motor-car accident on the cliffs of Wales and her temporary disappearance. It fell to me to go up with other journalists to Oban, in Scotland, where she had gone under another name, and to accompany her back to Glasgow. Journalists centred at Glasgow that day from various parts of the country as well as from London, and the hotel in which Violet

Charlesworth and her sister took refuge was overflowing with newspaper men, all of whom had their quarters there, for they were determined that the girl whom they knew to be Miss Charlesworth should not escape them without revelation of herself. It was enough to try the nerves of any young woman, and it must have tried Miss Charlesworth's, although she possessed more than her share of composure and capacity. All the journalists were out to get a statement from her, and I need not traverse the efforts in that direction, and it must be sufficient to say that on the next morning, with still more Pressmen arriving, Miss Charlesworth, without acknowledging her identity, placed herself in my hands in order to escape the little army of my colleagues who were besetting her. She indicated that she might have something of interest to tell me, if I could get her away to Edinburgh, and I accordingly made plans to help her and her sister to leave the hotel unnoticed. Fortunately, I had with me a colleague from London, and with his help I set to work.

First of all, in order to put the others on a wrong track, we went and bought four first-class tickets for Edinburgh, a fact which was quickly known, and caused journalistic pickets to be established on the departure platforms, and then I secured a motor-car and had it taken round to the

back entrance of the hotel, where the public never went. With the motor-car in waiting my friend and I mounted to the room of the ladies, whom we found ready garbed for departure. With them we emerged into the corridor, and some of our competitors who were on guard there immediately made ahead of us, descending the stairs to the hall of the hotel in order to get the rest in readiness. But the ladies and ourselves, instead of going downstairs, went upstairs to the floor above, and passed along to the extreme end of the corridor, where, as I had previously ascertained, there was a whitewashed stairway used by the servants, descending through the various floors to the basement. Down this stairway we hurried, trusting to good fortune that our motor-car would not be surrounded by reporters. We were in luck's way; the car had been undetected, and we packed ourselves in it, and away we went for Edinburgh. Here, by all that was unfortunate, a London journalist, who happened to be in the city, spied me as we passed the post office. I pretended not to see him, and hoped that he would not recognise me; a false hope, as I subsequently discovered. I took the ladies to the Carlton Hotel, secured a suite of rooms for them, and was preening myself in the happy confidence that I had eluded the journalists in Glasgow. Foolish optimist was I.

By some means or other, they had secured the scent, and once in Edinburgh suspicion was turned into certainty by the man having seen me in the motor-car outside the post office. It was a heavy task from this time onward through the evening and till late in the night to keep them at bay, and, indeed, one of them managed to get through and secure audience of the ladies.

It was eight o'clock that night when Miss Violet Charlesworth, hitherto known to me as Margaret Macleod, said that she was in fact the missing Violet. A statement from her explaining her disappearance appeared in my paper next morning.

She was to go to London with her sister in order to elaborate her statement, and it was my part to escort her thither. When we left Edinburgh by train, about ten o'clock, there was a considerable crowd on the platform, and, of course, it was soon spread abroad by the evening papers that Violet Charlesworth and her sister were on the way to London. This accounts for the fact that, although I had a reserved first-class compartment, and kept the blinds down whenever we were in a station, we had a group on the platform at every stoppage, sometimes a considerable crowd, all anxious to see the girl in my charge. I remember dashing out at York station to get some papers

at a bookstall, and in the course of my sprint had two halts, one caused by a local reporter, who desired to get something for his evening paper, and to whom I gave a twenty seconds' interview, and the other due to an unexpected encounter with Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P., who stopped me with a chaffing word.

Back again into my compartment, I began a consultation as to what our course of action should be on arrival at King's Cross, where it was now pretty certain there would be a crowd waiting to meet us. Several things had to be guarded against. One was the zeal of rival newspaper men, who would not flinch from a friendly and temporary kidnapping of Miss Charlesworth from under my eyes, and the other was the public attention which would be rivetted on the girl, and might lead to demonstrations, embarrassing, if not otherwise unpleasant. I arranged with my two charges the course of procedure. Violet was to take my arm on alighting from the carriage, and was to maintain her hold on me under any pressure, and was at the same time to say no single word of any kind in response to questions and ejaculations which would no doubt be forthcoming. Her sister, Lilian, was to follow the same course with my colleague. Once on the platform, we should have to make our way down to the exit

in order to find the motor-car which would be in waiting for us.

The crowd at King's Cross was even bigger and more excited than I had expected, and as the train slowed up the people surged round the carriage. I realised that it would be almost impossible for us to descend, and that if we succeeded in doing so we should be in the midst of trouble at once, so I decided to keep the blinds down in the compartment and to remain there for a minute or two in the hope that the public would scatter, and that my friends with the car would come and help to rescue me from an embarrassing position. A minute or so passed, and the crowd showed no signs of diminishing. The girls were on tip-toe to leave, and I stood ready to take advantage of any slackening of the throng on the platform.

Suddenly, the door on the line side opened, and one of two men standing there exclaimed, "This way; come along, quickly! Come down here and over the other platform." The girls made a move forward. With a momentary thought that they might in some way be enemies, I pulled Violet and her sister back, because I felt that they were under my protection, at any rate for the time being.

"It's all right," hastily said one of the men.

"Don't you see I'm the stationmaster?" I caught a glimpse of the braid on his coat and his silk hat, and realised that his help was genuine.

We assisted the girls down to the line, and then up on to the platform opposite, and, with Violet's arm linked in mine, and her sister's linked in that of my colleague, we made a dash for the gates. Our manœuvring had become known by this time, and a great part of the crowd was rushing pell-mell round to meet us. We met the stream at the gates, and were suddenly encircled by a clamouring throng, in the middle of which were reporters who were quite determined to get some kind of an announcement from Violet Charlesworth, or, alternatively, a statement from me. I realised for the first time the insistence and vivacity of the modern newspaper man. Vainly did I try to keep them at bay. One or two of them, I am quite sure, would have been prepared to wrest Violet from my arm, but she clung close to me, thoroughly frightened—I think not merely by the eagerness of the Pressmen, but by the excitement of the crowd which assailed us on all sides and prevented us from making progress in any direction. It was difficult to know what to do because, in the midst of the gathering, and with night upon us, I had no means of picking out our motor-car, nor any immediate place of shelter.

The crowd eddied us against the door of a four-wheeler. Here was refuge for a moment at any rate. I thrust my charge inside, and my colleague did the same with her sister, and then, shouting to the man to drive on anywhere, I got in myself.

As good luck would have it, I no sooner shut the door than two of my friends with the waiting motor-car appeared near by, and I indicated to them that they should follow us, so that we might change vehicles as soon as we were well away from the excitement. We started off in our four-wheeler, followed by a long string of taxi-cabs and hansoms chartered by other journalists, but we were all right now. Some three or four hundred yards away the motor-car pulled up, and I had the four-wheeler stopped just behind, and rapidly got the girls from one conveyance to the other. After that, we soon left all our friends behind.

The strain on the girls had been heavy, and Violet Charlesworth, who was the subject of so much adverse criticism and wonderment, then and afterwards sat back in the car, trying to hide the tears rolling down her cheeks. That was my encounter with Violet Charlesworth.

CHAPTER XV

SOME STORIES OF DISTINGUISHED MEN

THE busy newspaper man of these times makes the fleeting acquaintance of many interesting people, and he gets momentary snapshots of notabilities denied to outsiders. Men high in literature, politics, law, or commerce are not demi-gods to him, but ordinary human beings, and they are very much more interesting this way.

A good many years ago I was present as a Pressman at an elaborate dinner given in the West End by some of the members of the London Chamber of Commerce to literary people, and among those present was Andrew Lang. The dinner was excellent, the prevalent spirit was genial, and the aftermath of speeches was pretty much of the kind to be expected. Moderately successful commercial men formed the bulk of the hosts, and they did their best by their guests. Withal, one could not help feeling that there was a touch of kindliness with regard to the profession

of letters, just a mere suspicion of a generous note in the well-meant reference to the progress and power of writers generally. To an observer it appeared that in the minds of those who had achieved much in the world of buying and selling in the accumulation of profits, that those who concerned themselves with ideas, those who made poetry and wrote tales, who analysed emotions, must be treated with a measure of appreciative tolerance. That was the impression given.

Well, Mr. Andrew Lang was to make one of the replies, and he looked as delicate, as acute, and as cultured as ever he did, and then, as ever, his voice was disappointing, disillusioning, with those thin, high notes always so strangely out of harmony. I shall never forget how in his piping accents he offered thanks for the good and generous words which had fallen from previous speakers. After all, he said, what were they, writers, in comparison with the men of action who were entertaining them? Look at what they had accomplished. Look at the great record of—of——

He bent low towards his neighbour and said in a stage whisper, "What is the name of these people?"

One may be forgiven for thinking that that was the event of the night, important as was the dinner and weighty as were the speeches.

Cabinet Ministers are not human beings at all to many newspaper readers, but really they are very ordinary sometimes and very attractive sometimes. A year or two ago, when the House of Commons was frequently sitting till the small hours, I walked across Palace Yard to the corner of New Bridge Street at two one morning, in search of a taxi-cab to convey a friend and myself to the south of London. There is a great rush for taxi-cabs after late sittings by members of the House and by Pressmen, and the best way is to take your stand at the corner of New Bridge Street and watch for the approach of a taxi-cab from any direction, and then go forward to meet it before it reaches the corner. On this particular morning there were standing on the curb a few feet from us Mr. John Burns and Mr. Arthur Henderson, who, like ourselves, were looking for a conveyance. We had to wait some minutes. Presently we caught sight of a cab slowly approaching from St. James's Park, and my friend said to me, "I had better go, or Burns will collar it." Mr. Burns also apparently thought action was necessary, because he started to walk off at the same time as my friend. The journalist began to run, and this was a challenge which Mr. Burns of all men could not refuse. He pulled his hat down firmly and sprinted, and, for a matter

of forty yards, it was touch-and-go between the journalist and the Cabinet Minister, and then the determination as well as the virility of Mr. Burns triumphed. He outdid the man who was nearly twenty years younger, secured the taxi, and drove up with it in triumph to the corner of the Palace Yard. Mr. Burns is a generous man, and, by way of celebrating his victory, he invited my friend and myself into the taxi, and we all travelled to the south of London together.

One of the pleasantest interviews I ever did was that with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on his famous hero, "Sherlock Holmes." Readers of the *Strand Magazine* will recall how, after a series of exciting and popular adventures, Sherlock Holmes, the great detective, in a culminating story, tracks an arch-criminal to Switzerland, grapples with him on a mountain-edge, with the result that both go to their doom below. This ended the series, much to the regret of a very large number of Sherlock Holmes' admirers. The popularity secured by these stories must have been demonstrated to the editor of the magazine in the ensuing months, and he probably found his public saddened, even resentful, that Sherlock Holmes should have met his end, and the result was that the *Strand* announced another adventure of Sherlock Holmes in the coming Christmas number.

The title of the story was given, and it was quite clear that Sherlock Holmes was resuscitated. When this announcement appeared I was deputed to go and see Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and to ask him to state in the shape of an interview whether Sherlock was coming to life or not, whether he had more than one life, and anything more that might be found out about him. I was a stranger to the author, but on reaching his place in the country at Hindhead I was very kindly received, although at first I could get no statement for publication. "Oh, I don't want to talk about Sherlock Holmes," said Sir Arthur; "I don't want to say anything about him. Let the chap alone. Come and have some tea, and let's talk about politics."

He insisted on my discharging the cab in which I had journeyed from the station at Haslemere, three miles away, because he was going to send me back in his motor-car. There was a game of billiards and tea, and finally the author softened and told me about Sherlock. "You see," he said, "when he fell over that cliff there was no indication that he was killed by the fall. You will remember that in the last story I did not say anything about his body being discovered. There you are. That's the way out."

I asked about the future of Sherlock. Was he

again to devote his attention to the unravelling of apparently insoluble mysteries? Sir Arthur shook his head.

"Look at the years the man has been at it," he said. "Look at the things he has done. Just think of the strain there must have been on him throughout all this time. No man should continue indefinitely at such a pace, and Sherlock Holmes realises the time has come when he must have a permanent rest—at least a rest from the active investigation of crime."

I pressed the author as to Sherlock's plans. "Bee culture," was the reply. "He is going to take a little place in the country and go in for bee culture. That is his hobby. Of course, he has long wanted a period of rest to write his standard book on the psychological side of crime, and it is possible that some portion of his leisure may be given to that. The main object of his life, however, will be bee culture."

Later, when Sir Arthur had left this vein, he talked about Sherlock Holmes at large, and the unexpected way in which the stories caught on. Mr. Gillette, the American actor-manager, produced a play written from one of the stories, and it was a matter of difficulty to him that Sherlock had kept himself aloof from all sentimental relationship with women. A love story was essential for the stage.

"Gillette wired to me from America, 'Can I marry him?' and I replied by cable, 'Yes, marry him or bury him, just as you please.'"

I am one among the many journalists who have sought interviews with Mr. Bernard Shaw, and have found him the most fruitful of interviewees. Not that one could always lay hands on him; but, when one did, there was always something good as the result. I went to see him once, because it was announced that Jim Corbett, a prize-fighter, was to take the principal part in one of his plays which was to be performed in America. The incongruity of a prize-fighter having a principal part, or one of the principal parts, in a Shaw play was piquant, and I felt sure that the author would have some interesting comment to make on the enterprise of the Americans in casting Jim Corbett for the part. Mr. Shaw was surprised at my surprise. "Why not?" said he. "I think it is the most appropriate choice. You see, Mr. Corbett, who has been the champion heavy-weight, is the head of his profession, as I am the head of mine. What happier combination could there be? Oh no; I do not think it is a case for criticism at all."

I once went to see him about the unmerciful way in which critics had condemned a new production from his pen. In the near past some

of his plays had been very highly praised by the daily papers, and then on the occasion of this production they had swept down on him with fury. What was the explanation of it? That was my errand. Why should all unite in condemnation of a play from the hand of one who had previously produced masterpieces? I got him at the close of a meeting in the Queen's Hall, and I put the matter to him as tersely as may be. What did he think of the critics? Why did they abuse his play? "Critics have abused this play,' he said; "of course they have abused it. Naturally the critics have abused it. Send a better class of critic."

The relations of public men to journalists have, I fancy, changed a good deal in recent times, and there has been no more striking example of this than the attitude of Mr. Lloyd George, who, as a Cabinet Minister, maintains his old informal, friendly way with journalists. So far as Cabinet Ministers are concerned this is something of a revolution.

When Mr. Lloyd George was President of the Board of Trade there occurred the first great railway dispute, which threatened to put the railways of the country out of action. He was in the thick of the negotiations, and for days the office of the Board of Trade was never left by a

score of reporters, for an announcement as to a settlement or definite rupture might be forthcoming at any minute, and it was necessary to wait on for news from one side or from the other, or, indeed, from the department itself. With worry thick upon him, Mr. Lloyd George passed in one afternoon through a crowd of Pressmen, and was struck by their comfortless waiting in the square outside. He invited them in, put a room at their disposal, saw that they were provided with tea, and sent them up some cigarettes to pass away the time.

All kinds of persons are subject to the demands of the unblushing reporter in these days, and royalty is not excepted. I have pleasant recollections of aid given to me some years ago by one who is himself a prince, and is closely related, moreover, to the British royal family. At the close of the war in South Africa, when the then Prince of Wales, the present King, was about to make a visit to Australia, it was freely rumoured that he might go to South Africa also, to help to smooth over the rancour and bitterness which followed the struggle there. Eventually I sought confirmation about the proposal—which had a personal as well as a national interest. Other reporters were on the same mission. I tried Ministers, royal secretaries, Colonial agents

—all in vain. Passing along Whitehall one afternoon, trying to devise some means of getting the news, I bethought me of a new expedient, one which, while it would probably provide a snub, would do no serious harm, and might lead to something definite. I remembered that Prince Louis of Battenberg, the brother-in-law of Princess Beatrice and a personal friend of the Prince of Wales, held a position at the Admiralty, and was reputed to be an accessible man. I determined to try him. At the Admiralty door I presented my card and quite expected the message to come back to say that his Serene Highness was not in. I was pleasantly disappointed. Prince Louis was in his room, and was ready to see me. I found him a tall, big figure of a man, with a trim black beard, and the clear eyes of the sailor, with nothing German about his look, manner, or speech. I plunged into the matter at once, and told him I was a Pressman, and that I wanted to know whether the Prince was actually going to South Africa, and that I was in no sense seeking an interview, but only information and news.

"Well," he said, "I was dining with him last night, and, of course, I know all about it. But I don't know whether it would be well for it to get out yet." I pressed my point, and was successful.

"Very well," he said, "it's like this." And then he told me the whole of the royal plans—how the Prince and Princess were going to stop at South Africa, the places they were to visit, and, in general, their programme for the occasion. This made up an exclusive story, and I was much tickled at the fact that my colleagues were unable to find out where the story came from.

The witticisms of the late Mr. Labouchere are only to be fully appreciated by those who have heard his soft delivery and knew his whimsical air. Nothing surprised him, and he had no illusions on the conventional virtues.

He was talking to me one day about a certain member of Parliament, who, for various reasons, had been "sent to Coventry" by the members in general.

"He still continues to be a member of the House!" said Mr. Labouchere; "and why should he not? For private reasons he desired to become a member of Parliament, and he became a member of Parliament, and no doubt that serves his purpose, and will continue to serve his purpose. Why, then, should he bother about the lack of attention paid to him by other members? He has achieved his aim, and he will, no doubt, be prepared to shoulder the inconveniences which arise. That is the proper way to look at it.

I remember once being concerned with the prosecution of a man who had stolen £6,000, and, before the case came on, he appealed to me to do what I could to get him off. I pointed out that really he ought not to make an application to me. I bore him no ill-will, but we all have to pay in one way or another for the advantages we secure. I said, 'You have secured £6,000, and you will probably get three years' penal servitude. That's £2,000 a year—not a bad rate of pay, really, when you look at it from the commercial point of view.' Well, he got his term of punishment, and, on the whole, I think he did very well out of it."

CHAPTER XVI

THE PARLIAMENTARY DRAMA

I SPENT some five years in the Press Gallery of Parliament, watching the drama there, with those periods of dulness, flashes of interest, and intensive moments which give such attraction to affairs at Westminster.

Let me say a few words, first of all, about the Gallery—an institution by itself, and at the same time an integral part of Parliament. The forty or fifty seats at the end of the House, behind the Speaker's chair and below the ladies' grille, are only an outward and visible sign, for the Press Gallery numbers something over 150 members, of whom not more than a third can be comfortably seated in the accommodation provided for them within the Chamber. But there is a busy world immediately behind those seats and out of sight of the legislators and visitors. The doors from the Gallery proper open into a long ante-chamber, and within it are situated telephones and telegraph

instruments for the immediate flashing forth of urgent news. But this is, in fact, only an antechamber, for away behind, on either side, and above in various directions are to be found a network of rooms, large and small, murmuring with activity, all contributing to that output which keeps the world informed of the proceedings of the Legislature. In three or four of the larger rooms, big enough for public gatherings, you will always find men at work, writing their transcriptions from shorthand, turning out "London letters," or doing their descriptive sketches or leading articles.

There is a room given over to private telephones, these being the means of direct communication with particular newspaper offices. There is a little library, a reading-room, and other rooms, where members of the Press Gallery may play chess or smoke their pipes or draw their armchairs around the fire; a spacious dining- and tea-room and a bathroom contribute to the Gallery's club-like character.

A happy family are the Gallery men, diverse as are their occupations, their tastes and political preferences—for they vary as much as do the members on the floor of the House. Withal there is a comradeship which always leaves its mark on men who have been in the Gallery, a kind of

freemasonry which links together those who have ever had anything to do with Parliamentary work at Westminster.

Traditions cluster round the Pressmen, and the walls of the various waiting-rooms carry portraits of some of those reporters of years ago who have risen to distinction, sometimes to fame. First and foremost, of course, is Charles Dickens, who was a reporter in the Gallery, and after him comes a long line which includes Lord Russell of Killowen, Lord Chief Justice, Sir Edward Clarke, Mr. Justin M'Carthy, besides a sprinkling of those who are now members of the House.

Heavy is the work in the Gallery, but it does not dull the lighter journalistic spirit, and there is always prominent that cheerful isolation of outlook which distinguishes professional journalists in touch with public affairs. Extremely frank, even disrespectful, are the private comments of the Pressmen on some of the men whose words they have to take down—because the reporters have unique opportunities for judging real qualities and capacities. A predisposition on one side or the other in politics does not prevent them from forming a pretty accurate appraisement of the men below, and it is an appraisement which, if it could be given in all its candour to the public,

would be surprising and vastly entertaining reading.

Until the politician has reached the front rank —and sometimes even then—his degree of publicity depends very largely on the reporters, who necessarily have to be entrusted with judgment as to the degree of interest in a speech, and to decide in the case of each of the lesser-known men whether he should be given two lines or twenty lines or half a column.

I suppose no body of journalists have better opportunities for accumulating a store of good stories than those in Parliament, and even a year or two's occupation of a place there provides anecdote in plenty. A good many incidents pass before the eyes of the Parliamentary journalists, and these are supplemented by stories from the lobby which filter upwards to the Gallery smoking-rooms.

Lord Winterton used to be Lord Turnour before his father died, and as Lord Turnour sat, as he does now, for the Horsham Division of Sussex. He was, if not quite the youngest member of the House, very boyish-looking, and an enthusiastic partisan who did not pretend to subtlety, but cultivated a persistent boisterousness. I think his opponents would say he had no venom, but at the same time he was occasionally very

trying, though there was a certain naïveness about him, a lively clumsiness, which made up for a good deal. I remember, during an early stage of the present Government, when Mr. Asquith was Chancellor of the Exchequer, a little passage by which even Lord Turnour was abashed. Budget day in the House is a kind of sacred occasion, when the Chamber is packed in every part, when visitors throng the gallery and all the members listen with intense interest to the explanation of the financial arrangement for the year and a statement of what new taxes, if any, are to be imposed. It is a matter of form on these occasions that the Minister shall be given the utmost personal consideration in the course of his speech, which is necessarily not only lengthy, but complicated, filled with facts, illustrations, and figures. No one interferes in any way, and there is a compelling etiquette which requires that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whatever he may say, shall be given a silent hearing. Even to applaud is a breach. Mr. Asquith has a native dignity which he never fails to exercise in carrying out his responsible duties of State. Clearly and resonantly he laid before the assembled House his plans for the coming year. His speech went well. All listened with respect, keenness, and silence, for it is generally recognised by friends and foes that

Mr. Asquith has no equal in the present Parliament in the lucidity with which he presents complicated matter.

In the course of his speech he used a general, harmless phrase about some turn of public life, and Lord Turnour, as he was then, broke in upon the quietude by a very loud and sincere and appreciative "Hear, hear"; "hear, hear." The House was staggered. Mr. Asquith paused, took off his eyeglasses, laid them on the table in front of him, and turned a frozen look at young Lord Turnour. "I am sure," he said, in his deepest voice, "I am deeply obliged for the kindly appreciation of the noble lord." The House laughed merrily, Lord Turnour washed his hands in invisible soap, twisted his tall form hither and thither, blushed, and flung back his head in recognition of the snub.

It was after Lord Turnour's succession to the title of his father as Lord Winterton that he was travelling up from the South Coast one day, and, being a genial soul, got into conversation with a fellow-traveller, with whom he chattered on various topics till Victoria was approached. Then it came out in conversation that he was Lord Winterton. "You don't mean that?" said his fellow-voyager. "Lord Winterton! Do you know all the way up I've been taking you for that silly fool, Lord Turnour?"

I have mentioned one case in which a veteran leader has dealt with a rather arrogant youngster Now let me give an instance on the other side. Mr. Crawshay Williams, Liberal member for Leicester, made a maiden speech of inordinate length, tremendous fluency, and the most extraordinary confidence. He lectured the Conservatives, gave hints of guidance to other parties in the House, and altogether completely filled the picture for the time being. Mr. Balfour followed. Mr. Balfour, with that suave gracefulness which always distinguishes him on such occasions, paid his compliment to the previous speaker on his able maiden speech. It was a very able speech, but he did not know that he could follow it in detail, though he realised that the hon. member had a wealth of knowledge and a depth of experience. He suggested how welcome the new member would be in the House, and how much he would add to the value of its deliberations. That was all. But it was quite delightful. I confess I felt the profoundest sympathy for Mr. Crawshay Williams during Mr. Balfour's commendation.

I remember one all-night sitting during the 1909 Budget discussion, how, between four and five o'clock in the morning, after all the contentious business had been disposed of, Mr. John Burns brought forward a non-controversial departmental

measure, which, after giving a short explanation, he asked the House to pass immediately. It is on such occasions that the pushful back-bencher, who has not the capacity to take part in the ordinary debates, gets his chance of coming to the front and making himself a power, so long as he is not afraid of being considered offensive. All that such a member has to do is to say, "I object," and the mere fact that he protests against the measure is sufficient to stop its passage for that sitting. Mr. Claude Hay, at that time the Unionist member for Hoxton, was one of those who used to take advantage of these occasions, and he did so now.

"I object," he said. Mr. Burns got up to the Table, and pointed out that the measure merely had to do with the early removal of street *débris*, its title being "The Removal of Offensive Matter Bill." The tired House endorsed the Minister's conciliatory request with "Hear, hear"; "Hear, hear." The obstinate Mr. Claude Hay saw his chance. "I object," he said. Mr. Akers Douglas, the senior of the Conservative leaders present, rose to the Table and backed up Mr. Burns's request, and appealed to his follower, amid general cheers, not to oppose the passage of the Bill.

"I object," said Mr. Claude Hay, unflinchingly.

Then up rose Mr. Jeremiah McVeagh from the Irish benches, and persuasively made his appeal to the member for Hoxton.

"Why does the hon. member object?" he said. "It is true it is the 'Removal of Offensive Matter Bill,' but there is nothing personal in it." That ended the seriousness of the occasion.

One of the very best Parliamentary stories I have heard is told by Mr. Charles King in his brilliant book, "The Asquith Parliament." This is Mr. King's narrative—

"One day Mr. Speaker Lowther was away from his great chair with a cold. A prominent member of the Liberal Government, going into Brooks's Club, caught sight of Mr. Gully, son of the late Speaker, who was such a distinguished successor to Speaker Peel and Speaker Brand. Mr. Gully, in addition to being son of Mr. Speaker Gully, occupies with great tact the high position of secretary to the present Speaker. The member of the Government—I do not think it would be fair to give his name—asked Mr. Gully how the Speaker was. Mr. Gully replied that he was very much better, and would be back in the House in about a day.

"'I am glad to hear that,' said the Minister. 'I don't know what we should do without him. He's the best Speaker we ever had.'

"The next moment, of course, as he was walking away, the Minister realised that he had said a rather awkward thing to the son of Mr. Speaker Gully. He went into the next room. He saw a friend sitting there, and remarked to him: 'Oh, I have said such a stupid thing. I have just met young Gully, and I said Lowther was the best Speaker we ever had.'

"But the gentleman to whom he addressed this last remark was Mr. Peel, son of Lord Peel, who was Speaker of the House of Commons before Mr. Gully!

"'I dare say,' answered Mr. Peel, dryly, 'if you went outside and walked down St. James's Street you might meet one of the Brands.'"

I have been present at many exciting passages in the House of Commons, but of all of them the most sensational was that on October 28, 1908, when suffragettes chained themselves to the grille of the ladies' gallery and had to be removed, together with the portions of the grille to which they had fastened themselves.

The evening had been a dull one, and discussion had dragged on in connection with the Licensing Bill, which was then before the House. Sketch-writers, including myself, had had a light time, and we anticipated practically nothing to do through the latter part of the sitting, and at a quarter to

eight I went upstairs to the dining-room in the happy assurance it mattered little, so far as my paper was concerned, what the Commons did for the next hour or so. It was at about a quarter-past eight, in the midst of dinner, that news was conveyed to myself and a colleague—it is of no consequence from what source—that a secret plan was afoot to create a disturbance in the House, and that very shortly—at half-past eight, to be precise—women in the gallery were to lock themselves to the grille and were to throw defiance at members below in demonstration of their demands for votes. I think we did not give much weight to the rumour, because there had been forecasts of similar kind before, and in nearly every case nothing at all had happened to justify the prophecy of trouble. Still, we could not afford to neglect the warning, and we hastily concluded our dinner and went down to the Gallery in order to be prepared for anything that might happen.

Half-past eight in the evening, it should be explained, is perhaps the flattest time of the sitting, because it is midway in the dinner-hour lull, when the mediocrities and bores of the House get their chance and keep proceedings going until the stream of interest gathers force again with the return of leaders and the bulk of the various parties. It follows that the Gallery also is more than half

empty, is devoid of sketch-writers, artists, and commentators, whose duty only keeps them in the presence of legislators throughout those periods when there is a possibility of serious interest in one shape or another. While the occupancy of the benches below is limited to a scattered few, the Gallery has just a sprinkling of those shorthand writers who are carrying out the quarter-of-an-hour turns for the news agencies and the more spacious papers. Even to these the period is one of comparative leisure, for the speakers are nearly always men who can, in the current phrase, be "kept down to a few lines."

Placidity combined with dulness lay over the House, therefore, when my friend and I went into it at twenty minutes past eight. I remember that Mr. Caldwell was in the chair, and that a back-bench Unionist was rattling out something about the iniquities of the Licensing Bill. We were half inclined to go back and have a cup of coffee in peace and dismiss from our minds the possibility of a disturbance, but we decided, somewhat grudgingly, to wait until the appointed time, to give a chance to these disturbers, if any there were. We sat at the side of the Press Gallery, so that by looking obliquely upwards we had the ladies' grille in view. The grille, it may be explained, is a gilded criss-cross framework which fronts the banked

seats making up the ladies' gallery, and it is through the wide interstices of the trellis-work that the occupants of the gallery have to view the proceedings below. The grille is divided into upright sections about two feet wide.

We noted that whether there was to be any disturbance or not the ladies' gallery was unusually crowded, and that the occupants were seemingly paying deferential attention to the wearisome debate on the floor far below them. Minutes crept by, and we saw no movement nor any indication suggesting that what we had been told was true. The hand of the clock had reached the half-hour, and we were just on the point of condemning ourselves for undue credulity, when I saw a tiny hand pushed through one of the lower openings of the trellis-work, apparently making some arrangement there. Instantly we knew that our information was right, and that the great scene was at hand. For five tense seconds that little hand was doing something round the metal-work, and a murmuring whisper among the women could be distinctly heard by us. There was hardly time to realise these things before a chain, attached in the first place to the woman's body, had been padlocked on to the grille, and a defiant feminine voice had exclaimed, "There."

Events now galloped. There was a sudden

and tremendous commotion in the ladies' gallery. Attendants in evening dress rushed to the front of the gallery and apparently attempted to wrest the woman away from the grille, only to find that she was securely fastened to it. It seemed to those below that the other occupants of the gallery were protesting with the attendants against the way they tried to get the woman out. A medley of shouts, exclamations, appeals, and denunciations descended past us on to the heads of the astonished members of the House beneath.

"Let her alone——"

"How dare you touch her in that way!"

"My name is——"

"I tell you we are here to protest."

Then suddenly from the struggling mass came portions of a speech from the chained girl, whose name was Miss Matters. She hurled words in a rich contralto at the members below her, who were still heroically pretending to continue the debate.

"Members of the Liberal Government," she called, "we have listened too long——"

There was a resumption of the struggle, in which men and women seemed to be mixed up in the gallery, while from the mass came all kinds of incoherent ejaculations.

Again Miss Matters broke out: "Too long have women been kept behind this grille——"

Another fierce scuffling cut short her words, and in the midst of it there was a diversion at the other end of the gallery, where, it seems, a second girl had chained herself. She had let through the framework a bill, about two feet square, with the words:

PROCLAMATION.

VOTES FOR WOMEN.

WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE.

She had done this unfettered while the disturbance was going on around Miss Matters. Miss Helen Fox was this lady's name, and she at once became the centre of another struggle. Members from the floor were hurrying up to the gallery by this time, and, meanwhile, the exclamations from both ends of the gallery were continuing. We could only catch snatches, but they were eloquent of the disturbance. I heard such phrases as: "Do not hurt her." "Too long have we been behind this insulting grille." And then there was a mixed-up struggle, while apparently some of the attendants tugged at her. She broke off to exclaim, "You cannot get me away. I am fastened."

There was a hurried consultation of the attendants, and then they hastened from the gallery to get implements which would break Miss Matters' chain or file her free. Left to herself for a few seconds, Miss Matters pressed her face against the grille and screamed out: "We have listened too long to the illogical utterances of men who know nothing about it, and we demand of this Government calling itself Liberal, but which is really il-Liberal——"

"Votes for women," "Votes for women," put in Miss Fox, in a thin treble, from the other side.

Miss Matters: "To show its Liberalism."

Miss Fox: "Votes for women! Votes for women!"

Miss Matters: "For over forty years we have sat behind this grille."

Then there was a resumption of the struggling with the attendants, and members below watched the scene as though it was a play. Mr. Caldwell, in the Chair, was the picture of icy inattention to the commotion, and the member on his feet, making a notable effort to appear unconcerned, went on with his facts and figures, and in the interests of good order raised his voice to try and drown the speech of Miss Matters above him.

"How dare you touch me?" cried Miss Matters, who was apparently in the hands of the attendants.

"I'll have you up for assault. Yes, do just as you please."

All the other ladies had been cleared from the gallery, and there was room for the attendants to attack the grille itself, and two or three of them seized a section to which Miss Matters was fixed and pulled at it with might and main.

Crack! crack! went the framework.

"Hurrah!" shouted Miss Matters.

"Votes for women!" chirruped Miss Fox, firmly attached to the grille at the other end.

Crash! A section of the grille came out by the side of Miss Matters. Grille and she were hurried into the corridor, with one attendant bearing the weight of the iron framework, two others holding the lady.

Then was the turn of Miss Fox, and as the men came up to her she tried to emulate her eloquent colleague.

"Attend to the necessary things first," she cried. "Votes for women!"

Furiously attendants tore at the grille, and the particular section of it came down with a run.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Miss Fox, laughingly, and I caught a glimpse of her being escorted out with the grille chained to her.

The last "hurrah" had hardly died away before there was a further sensation. At the other end

of the House, from the midst of the Strangers' Gallery, rose a young man of about twenty-five years of age.

"I demand justice for the women of England," he cried. "Votes for women! Votes for women!"

Attendants seized him, but for an instant he wrestled himself free and threw over the heads of those near him an armful of suffrage hand-bills, which descended in a snowstorm on members of the House.

"Votes for women! Votes for women!" he cried, and shouting and struggling he was rushed away.

The women from the grille had been taken round to the long corridor into the famous Committee Room 15, where the police and officials gathered round, and files were brought into use for the freeing of the protesters from the portions of the House of Commons to which they had attached themselves.

Those who have had anything to do with the legislators are occasionally asked what is the most amusing incident that they have witnessed in Parliament. The passage that always comes to my mind is the one in which Mr. Handel Booth, a grave-faced Liberal, made an audaciously irrelevant speech of fifteen minutes, with the object of calming down an unpleasant Parliamentary

situation. Mr. Booth is a pertinacious obstructer in the Commons, a big, burly man, with red hair that stands out like a coxcomb, an aquiline nose, a look of intense seriousness, and a voice filled with melancholy determination. Sometimes he is attacking the Government, of which he is a nominal supporter, more frequently he is coming to its rescue, and he has repeatedly established himself as one of the attractive and notable personalities of Parliament. Never did he perform a more remarkable accomplishment than on the occasion which I am about to describe.

It was on the motion for the adjournment of the House, a motion which gives opportunity for the raising of any topic, and this evening the subject selected by a member was a speech of one of the Irish Nationalists in Australia, which apparently had some connection with the King. The actual facts were difficult to ascertain in detail, because only brief telegrams had brought the matter before the public, and it was more than possible that some misinterpretation had been made of words which in themselves were not very serious. Nevertheless there was a piquancy about the situation, and when a Unionist brought up the speech somewhere between half-past ten and eleven the House was crowded and expectant, and the position was summed up by a journalist, who prophesied:

"There's going to be a jolly row." An indictment was in the Unionist's speech, and there was a defensive and guarded reply from the Nationalist benches, and feeling rapidly rose among members, as it became apparent that the House was on the verge of a hot discussion, in which the name of the Sovereign would be freely used.

Several members sprang up to continue the debate. Fifteen minutes had to lapse before the sitting automatically came to an end at eleven o'clock, and that fifteen minutes promised to yield some very unpleasant happenings. The eye of the Speaker fell upon Mr. Handel Booth, and an expectant House set itself to hear some fresh and piquant comments from the member for Pontefract.

"I rise, Mr. Speaker," said the matter-of-fact Mr. Booth, "to call attention to a matter of national importance. I refer to the pollution of rivers. There is no subject to which the House can more profitably direct its attention at this moment, and I feel it my duty to point out some of the many directions in which the question of the pollution of rivers affects life and character in general."

The surprised House of Commons caught its breath, and then it rippled gently as the intention of Mr. Booth became apparent. He could deal with any subject on the motion for the adjournment, and

had taken this sudden and inexplicable digression just because the House was agog for the more or less personal matter under review.

Gravely and with much emphasis, Mr. Booth urged the House to consider the pollution of rivers. "All rivers are polluted more or less. There is the River Amazon; that is polluted. There is a little rivulet beyond my garden in Yorkshire; that is polluted. Why is it that rivers are polluted? Because near the source a certain amount of earth is caught up by a stream, and is carried along with it."

With emphasis and with appropriate gesture Mr. Booth urged the ill-effects of the pollution of rivers, acknowledging that, to some extent, it was inevitable, but pressing the House all the time to take the matter into deep and serious consideration. The murmur of appreciation had soon developed into laughter, and when the House begins to laugh it is safe from the dangerous feeling engendered by personal allusions, such as were threatened in the previous discussion. Nobly Mr. Booth held the fort till the stroke of eleven. His seriousness was undisturbed throughout the time, although the House towards the end was rocking with laughter. That fifteen minutes' speech gave Mr. Booth a great lift-up as a parliamentarian.

CHAPTER XVII

AN IRISH POLITICAL FIGHT

If there is one thing more than another which should convince an Englishman that Ireland is a nation, and not merely a part of England, it is a few weeks' tour through that country when a general election is in progress, for that is a time when the racial traits of the people are shown up sharply, and to the Englishman always bewilderingly. Who can describe the thousand ways in which Irishmen differ from Englishmen? They think more rapidly, they think in different directions, and their thoughts break out at tangents; they hit their enemies harder, they forgive them quicker, and their feelings of the day are much more intense; they put words into action with lightning speed, and they mean violent things when they say them. They have, moreover, that wonderful personal fascination springing from their race which endears them to all who come into personal contact with them, and confuses their

slower enemies. The gallantry and genius they have given to the world have put them on a pinnacle for history, and even a hurried, superficial acquaintance with their distinctiveness leaves an Englishman convinced when they claim to be a people by themselves.

I had made a visit or two to Dublin and Belfast before, but I went over in the winter of 1910 to travel round in the south and west and do some descriptions of election scenes in the contest just beginning. I was there some weeks, and my travellings showed me what I dare say were common Irish scenes, but which to me were a succession of fresh and appealing pictures. Character illuminated all I saw. Economic conditions, political considerations, the demands of industry—all those things have to be taken into account by those whose business it is to dive deep into the tide of Irish life—but for my part I was content to derive impressions from the men and women I talked with, from the gatherings I saw, the conflicts which took place all round me, and the personal tendencies and actions which passed before the eyes. The great abstractions passed me by. I sought out the men and women.

Soon after I reached Dublin I had to go to a big meeting in the Town Hall, where Mr. John Redmond and other Irish leaders were to address a large

gathering, and the excitement, the exultation, the fervour of that big throng of Irishmen was one of the memories of my visit. Home Rule was at hand: let but this General Election go in its favour, and Home Rule was a fact. What that meant to the thousands present may easily be imagined by those who remember not merely the grievances of Ireland, but her efforts to secure self-government during the last quarter of a century or so. The gathering saw Mr. John Redmond as the first Prime Minister of Ireland.

To Mr. Redmond himself the prevalent ecstasy had drawbacks, for he, the centre of all activities, the chief of the present and the future, had to be prepared for swarms of personal well-wishers after the speeches were over, and to put up with a desire for acquaintanceship from some of the younger generation who would like to be in Parliament to help him. Mr. John Redmond is an Irish aristocrat, very remarkably respected, and with a dignity of presence which might well help to keep friendly intruders at bay. On this occasion, however, as he left the platform, the feeling was so great that I feel sure he would have suffered a great deal of interruption in passing out had not the simplest of expedients occurred to him. He found a strange journalist who had approached him in connection with public matters, with whom

he could converse as he walked along, and conversation with him served as a shield from friends and would-be friends. He passed along with the journalist through what was really an aisle of people, all anxious for a word, and some of them for more than a word.

"Striking statues here," said the Irish leader, indicating groups around the hall.

Young men bent forward with a phrase of welcome, and they got a passing smile and salutation as Mr. Redmond continued his task with the journalist.

"Remarkable hall this," he said. "Has a story well worth knowing. Why don't you see the Lord Mayor and ask him to get you shown over it properly?"

Native courtesy to an English visitor had something to do with Mr. Redmond's talk as we walked through the crowd out into the street, but I am quite sure also that I afforded ready means of avoiding exuberant attentions.

As it was election time, the country was naturally in a ferment about politics, a ferment due not only to the fact that the Northern Unionists on the one hand and the Redmondites on the other saw Home Rule now within measurable distance, but also to the fact that a section of the Nationalists, led by Mr. William O'Brien, though desiring Home

Rule, were opposing vehemently Mr. Redmond and all his works. The resulting state of affairs among a people such as the Irish can be pictured without effort.

One of the first places I went to was Cork, the storm centre, where Mr. Willie Redmond was opposing Mr. O'Brien, and the city was divided, so to speak, into rival camps. The candidates were quartered in different hotels, and from the hotels sallied forth each night accompanied by a faithful army of thousands. There were no indoor political meetings such as there are in this country, and no heckling, no questions, no argumentative exchanges. They were not in the piece at all.

Several hundreds of Royal Irish Constabulary, really a military force, had been brought into the town to prevent disturbance and to safeguard the limbs and lives of the contestants. They did not mean any serious harm to each other, those rival forces, but if you were an O'Brienite or if you were a Redmondite, as the case happened to be, you might be shouted down, and if that was not sufficient you might be knocked down—it was all for the good of the cause, and presently, after the affair was over, all would be happy and merry together again. I think that hits the general situation, notwithstanding all the ferocious phrases which were used during the fight.

The two leaders were vastly interesting men, although so entirely varying in their personalities. Mr. William O'Brien, a prophetic figure, tall and gaunt, with long beard, long hair, great beetling eyebrows, had a hissing intensity of manner which swelled into a scream of denunciation and hate or sank into a soft, appealing whisper. Mr. Willie Redmond, on the other hand, a brother of the Irish leader, was a debonair, determined, blue-eyed Irishman, who could vary the softest brogue with thundering oratory—one of the most popular men personally who ever set foot in the House of Commons—and, moreover, a tremendous favourite in the land of his birth. He was, however, on this occasion assailing the stronghold of a veteran in Mr. O'Brien, and the odds were slightly against him. Not that he cared for that. Indeed, he delighted in it. What Irishman would not?

Another feature of the election was that both candidates were fighting two seats, and each had the chance of being elected to represent two places, and as it happened this was the safer contest of the two for Mr. O'Brien, because his other contest up in County Mayo was only a forlorn hope. Mr. Redmond, on the other hand, was quite certain of election for Clare. If, however, it is imagined that there was any slackening of enthusiasm, any falling off of vigour in the fight because of these facts,

a great mistake is being made, for of all the political contests I have ever watched this was among the most furious.

Sections of the city were known to be in favour of one candidate or the other, and it was easy to know the preference of a locality by its banners, its printed appeals, and other outward and visible signs of preference. Even the poorest districts made a show.

In place of indoor meetings, the candidates would address their supporters in the open air, generally from a carriage or a wagonette or a jaunting-car, occasionally from the first floor window of a house. But more interesting to a visitor than the actual speeches was the demonstration made nightly by each party, a demonstration consisting of a procession roughly organised, tremendous in its size, which paraded the main streets with the candidate at its head, and brought its peregrinations to a close at his hotel, where he would address his people from the balcony. There was something joyously Dickensian in it all.

One of the first demonstrations after my arrival was that made by Mr. Willie Redmond's supporters, who took their candidate with them and gallantly marched, not only through the part of the town favourable to the Redmondites, but also through some of the O'Brienite territory. It was a great

night. I went to Mr. Redmond's hotel an hour beforehand. Even at that time there were a couple of thousand people in the street waiting the emergence of their hero, and the crowd continually increased until the moment for departure arrived, when there were, I should think, something like five thousand people practically filling the street as far as one could see in each direction. By the side of the kerb, stretching along in each direction, were groups of men, carrying on their shoulders a framework, on which rested a flaming tar-barrel, and at the hotel entrance women were massed, 400 or 500 of them, some with bare arms, many carrying shillelaghs, all of them singing and cheering intermittently in honour of Mr. Redmond.

Altogether it was a stirring picture, with more than a touch of Hogarth in it as you looked along and saw seething crowds lighted up by tar-barrels, the women with their cudgels, banners of various kinds, many musical bands, the whole concourse meanwhile vivified by waves of cheering, snatches of Irish songs, denunciations of the other side, and delirious approving shouts of their champion.

Wedged into the thick of the crowd outside the hotel were two or three brakes to accommodate the local Redmondite leaders, and it was towards one of these that Mr. Redmond, with myself in his wake, struggled through the delighted,

bare-armed women who were prepared almost to lift him to his seat, and who would certainly, if they had not been restrained, have overflooded the vehicle in their efforts to do him homage. Presently the crowds began to move, and for a time the semblance of a royal progress was in being: the enthusiastic throng reached as far as one could see in front and behind, and the windows of the houses and shops by which we passed were occupied with people who waved handkerchiefs and flags, and sang and cheered their salutations and their hopes for victory. Even in the hostile territory something of this was experienced, because there was, of course, here and there an admixture of partisans.

We were prepared for trouble, and it was when we got fairly into the opponents' camp, and I was standing up in the brake to see things better, that Mr. Willie Redmond said to me: "Better sit down, because we may get some stones from here." As a matter of fact, there were no stones.

The police had made special preparations for the occasion, because it had been rumoured that the O'Brienite army intended to break up the Redmondite procession, and for that purpose were massing themselves up the side-streets in order to descend in what may be called cavalry charges on the Redmondite crowd as it passed by. Those

plans, if they existed, were broken by the police, who, in double lines, were formed up across the side-streets down which the attackers might be tempted to rush.

Though I happened to be present with the Redmondites on this occasion, it must not be assumed that the other side did not make demonstrations equally as striking, equally as picturesque; and, as events proved, it was the O'Brienites who were somewhat stronger in numbers. Perhaps it gives a better illustration of the Irish character than anything I have said, that in spite of all the tremendous and wounding words used by adherents on both sides, it was Mr. Willie Redmond, the defeated candidate, who in the counting-room took the initiative in suppressing conversation for the speech of his opponent, Mr. O'Brien.

A characteristic of the Irish election is the presence in it of the priest who, revered and generally loved by his people, has an enormous influence in the decision at the polls. One of the pictures that remain in my mind is the crowded market-place of Cork, the houses draped with the green and white of the Irish flag, every window filled with eager faces, and in the middle of the swaying throng a silver-haired priest, with a strong voice and Irish brogue, appealing to the

people to do their duty and vote for one of the candidates.

I was at Waterford when Mr. John Redmond addressed a meeting in the theatre, the platform being crowded with local supporters, including an enthusiast who occasionally interrupted the proceedings with loud, strange cries of applause. A priest, of commanding appearance, rose from beside the Irish leader to support his candidature, and he suffered two interruptions from his platform colleague behind with Christian forbearance, but at the third time he could stand it no longer. He swept completely round, with his back to the audience, and shouted at the offender, "Will you hold your tongue for a minute?" What would have happened had such a thing taken place at an English public meeting it is hard to imagine. In Waterford the audience were delighted. It remains to be said that the reverend father's admonition was completely successful, and that throughout the remainder of the proceedings there was peace.

After travelling about from place to place, I eventually went to Westport on the coast of Mayo, a district in which Mr. William O'Brien lived, and where he was putting up his second fight against the Redmondites. The odds were against him here, even as they had been in favour of him in

Cork, and this was something in the nature of a forlorn hope. Do not think on that account there was any lack of spirit on the part of the O'Brienites or that the proceedings of his fighters lacked confidence or vim. The strength of the Redmondites was to be found in the scattered districts and the wide expanses of countryside comprised in the division, because in the town of Westport itself Mr. O'Brien had much personal popularity. Well do I remember the night he arrived in his motor-car to begin the fight in Mayo after his conquest down in Cork. He was met by a gathering of some hundreds who, with tumultuous shouts of welcome, escorted him to the Town Hall, where they flooded in, and where Mr. O'Brien was to address them. Here, as in the south, practically all carried sticks, for the shillelagh is by no means an extinct weapon. The sticks were held upwards and gripped about two-thirds of their length along, in good, convenient fashion for defence or attack.

The Town Hall was a clear space without seats, and the excited gathering pretty well filled it. I can see them now; sticks held breast high, some of them held above the head, and all the gathering excited like children at the return of their leader. Mr. O'Brien stood on the platform, his hands clasped behind his back, surveying the people with his deep-set eyes, and, altogether, looking

more sternly patriarchal than ever. He talked to them in language which roused them to passionate shouts and defiances, and set the sticks shaking and quivering in anticipation. Who could describe the scorn with which he spoke of the Redmondites, the loathing he bestowed on them, particularly on Mr. Dillon, who was to visit Westport on the following Sunday afternoon.

"Land-purchase killer!" he hissed. "Gombeen man! Will you hear him when he comes?"

"No!" screamed the audience in chorus, waving their sticks above their heads.

"Will you have him here?"

"No!" roared the audience, almost beyond control; "we'll settle him."

"What will you do with him?" cried Mr. O'Brien, quivering with rage.

"We'll shoot him, sorr!" was the instant response. And all the people in that hall twisted, and swayed, and howled like a wood which is swept by a great storm. Mr. O'Brien was as excited as his hearers, and they as excited as he. Then as the noise lulled down there came a faint word of dissent from the back of the hall, and it became apparent that one Redmondite had been bold enough to venture into this gathering of the enemy. A huge gasp of amazement at the audacity of the man, and then, with shrieks, the proceedings

were held up while the whole of the hundreds present sought to reach the offender, and I saw a wild, desperate, struggling mass forcing themselves together towards the back of the hall to get at him. He was satisfactorily disposed of —apparently thrown out—and then the audience came back in mild triumph and ranged themselves up to listen to more of the speech of Mr. O'Brien. As soon as silence had been obtained Mr. O'Brien, with his hands still clasped behind his back, thrust out his head on the audience, and said fervently: "I am glad to see you know how to deal with a bully when you find one."

The O'Brienites were strong in Westport, but they were not so strong, as I have said, in some of the outlying districts, and in accordance with custom, therefore, it became necessary that when an O'Brienite speech was to be made in one of these distant parts an audience should be taken along, together with the speaker, partly, I suppose, to encourage, partly to protect him while he was giving those on the outskirts the true milk of the political gospel. I joined in one of these excursions to a place about fourteen miles from our base of operations, and we started a procession of eleven or twelve jaunting-cars, with two cars containing police, and a motor-car for the candidate in the midst of the procession. Through hills, down by

the sea we went, past bogland, with occasional meadows and stretches of barren stoniness, and on our way we came to villages, where we were cheered now and again, but were generally regarded with a certain hostile curiosity. We reached our destination, a little market town, in the early afternoon, and we had lunch before proceeding out to the square in the middle of the town for the meeting. There was a happy anticipation that the meeting might be rushed by the local residents, but this expectation was not realised. Our own people formed a ring around the wagonette from which Mr. O'Brien spoke, and outside this was a fringe of natives, who smoked and listened and applauded not at all, but who showed no signs of a fight.

We started back on our return journey in the early hours of the evening, when it was already dusk, and after a mile or two signs appeared that we were not to have such a quiet passage home as we had had on the outward trip. From groups of cottages we were jeered, and occasionally a piece of earth was thrown at the line of vehicles. We had made, I suppose, some three or four miles, when we came to the first cottages of a village which had determined on attack. My jaunting-car was nearly at the end of the procession, and we were presently held up by the stoppage of those

in front; a good deal of shouting was going on, but in the gathering darkness it was not easy to understand what the trouble was about. It seems that from the village on one side a group of men had sent a fusillade of stones at some of the jaunting-cars in front, which had promptly pulled up to give battle. You don't let these things pass in Ireland. Leaders and officials and police were persuading the hotheads of our party to keep on the move, and not to resent these passing attentions of political opponents, and eventually got them on the go again. It was at this point that I heard the first revolver shot; no one, so far as I could ascertain, being injured by it. The front of the cavalcade was in motion, and we behind were just about to start when I saw two women and a man come running down a sloping field in front of us with missiles in their hands. A large stone flung by the woman hit the wheel of our conveyance, and a stone or piece of brick, which came from one of the men, pitched just behind the car in front of us, and I saw a young fellow on this car, wearing a light mackintosh, take a silver-plated revolver from his pocket and point it in the direction of the people and fire. There was no result, because the weapon was directed above the heads of our assailants, perhaps purposely—I cannot tell. I learned afterwards revolvers are

not taken out for any intentionally deadly use, but generally in order to frighten.

These, of course, are violent examples picked out of a series of gentler experiences which showed up the warm hearts as well as the quick passions of the people in Ireland. Wonderful was the understanding in political affairs to be found among some of the poor people, and I recall how one slatternly, middle-aged woman, who kept a sweet-shop, talked intelligently and understandingly of Henry George's projects and theories. In intervals of selling sweets—she also sold whisky—she had read much, and I found others of her class similarly endowed.

Down in the south-west, in an outlying part, I called one afternoon with a journalistic friend at the house of a parish priest, with a view to a friendly word with a man who led a lonely life, and who was beloved by his people. Strangers as we were, he gave us a heartening welcome, and though it was a fast day, and there was nothing much he could offer us to eat, he spread out a variety of drinks—wine of various kinds, spirits, and so on. Eventually we had something which was very like the illicit whisky manufactured without the sanction of the law on the lonely mountain sides or mountains. When we got back to the hotel we related this friendly occurrence to one of the local

politicians, an Irish solicitor, who happened to be there, and he said that if any of the suspicious liquor came his way he would send me on some to England. I was back in London a couple of months after this, and one morning there arrived by post a box containing a large broken bottle, the whole exhaling a pungent spirituous smell. Alas! the poteen had suffered disaster on the way. I wrote to my Irish solicitor friend, thanking him for his kindly intentions, and indicating what had happened. He wrote me back at once a regretful note. Here is the gist of it: "I am sorry that the bottle got broken on the way. I must try to make it up. As I have to-day successfully defended a man charged with manufacturing and keeping poteen, it is possible I shall have a further supply towards the end of the week."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BATTLE OF SIDNEY STREET

WHILE I was away in Ireland doing election pictures, in the end of 1910, I read of violent happenings in the East End of London, where foreign burglars in a jeweller's shop opened fire with automatic pistols on policemen who had discovered them, and caused the deaths of several officers. Incidentally one of the burglars was mortally wounded by one of his companions. Such a deadly business was unusual reading, even to the hardened newspaper man, and although never greatly interested in murders, I looked at the news on the following days to see if any of the assassins had been captured, and was mildly curious to know if anything fresh had been found out about what seemed a carefully-concerted and organised venture. None of the assassins were tracked, and their plans had apparently included a scheme for escape if disturbed in their work. They were believed to be foreigners, had left

evidence that they were expert burglars, and had demonstrated moreover that they had in their possession some of the most efficient firearms which science has produced.

The best intelligence of Scotland Yard was enlisted by the City Police in discovering men whose freedom was undoubtedly a menace to the community in general, and as the days went on the aid of the whole of the Metropolitan Police was brought to bear in the work of investigation, and all of the 20,000 members of the Force, policemen and detectives alike, with the help of such information as was obtainable, were on the look-out for the escaped men. Scotland Yard made tremendous efforts in the matter, and while the ports all round the country were carefully watched for attempted flight, a systematic search was made of the cheap lodging-houses and other resorts in London and its suburbs, a watch set on known bad characters who were at liberty, and certain sections of the East End mapped out and scrutinised day and night by unnoticed detectives, lounging along in workmen's clothes, in some cases sitting quietly in a first-floor window or passing as customers in local shops. The papers were full of the story. All the ramifications of the great search touched public curiosity to the heart. A multitude of suggestions were forthcoming about

the missing men, and they were called alternatively Russians, Letts, Poles, and Jews. One of them was supposed to be a desperate person named "Peter the Painter," a leader who would stick at nothing.

The operations developed presently into one concentrated effort to find this "Peter the Painter," and the public were kept from day to day on the hooks of eager anticipation. To the journalists of Fleet Street the period was one of many alarms, broken night rest, and a continual planning and contriving to help in securing the men sought. During the small hours of many winter mornings police and reporters—working separately, of course—laid watch in lonely East End streets, in some cases disguising themselves, always with the same result, namely, the discovery of no one at all connected with the affray.

People were beginning to think that the murderers were safely away when there came the great crisis of the search. The day was January 3, a fortnight or so after the affray. At nine o'clock in the morning at my house in South London, I was summoned by a call on the telephone and told hurriedly and excitedly by a colleague that "Peter the Painter" and his associates had been located in a house in Whitechapel, that they were keeping the officers at bay in the streets with their

automatic pistols, and that a siege of the house was going on. A great portion of the East End, I was told, was in ferment.

It took me but a minute or so to get an overcoat and plunge out into the street in search of a taxi-cab which should convey me to Whitechapel. As luck would have it, I could not find a taxi-cab disengaged before I got to High Street, Clapham, and then it was quicker for me to take the Electric Underground to the Bank. Arrived in the City, I found a cab, and was soon rushing along Mile End Road to the battle. Sidney Street was the actual name of the turning where the murderers were at fight. The preliminary stages of the tragedy were well developed when I reached the scene.

This was Tuesday morning, and it was on the Monday evening that the police had heard word with regard to No. 100, Sidney Street, which led them to think that "Peter the Painter" and one of his foreign murderer companions might be secured there. The devilish nature of the men, and the knowledge that they would stick at nothing to escape, led to careful preparations before any attempt at arrest was made, and at ten o'clock at night two pantechnicon vans passed slowly through Sidney Street, as though on their way with furniture. The vans contained not furniture,

but detectives, who were surveying the ground. At midnight a message was telephoned round to many of the East End police stations, and between twelve and one the suspected house was unobtrusively encircled by officers. They had to form a wide ring, because No. 100, Sidney Street was in the middle of a block of dwellings; and the knowledge that the two men inside were armed with modern automatic pistols led to precautions against arousing them before all was in readiness. At two o'clock in the morning three detectives entered the building, and learning that the men were upstairs in the front room on the second floor, set to work as expeditiously as might be to clear the house of all its other occupants. This was not easy, because there were several family groups who had to be disturbed and who had to be got out into the street with absolute hush and stealthiness. It was all accomplished in about half an hour, and the house was left empty except for the two assassins in the front room on the second floor.

Seven o'clock in the morning was the time when a move was made to rouse "Peter the Painter" and his companion. The best means of securing their capture had been discussed, and, looking back now on all the circumstances, it appears that there might have been safer means chosen. Perhaps it would have been well to have

forced a way into the room of the two men, or to have stationed silent sentries on the landing outside the door of the room, so that when the door was opened a combined rush might have thrown the two men off their feet before they could effect any damage. But the detectives did not proceed along these lines of action; they decided to try to get the men down to the street door.

From a little knot of detective chiefs assembled in a doorway exactly opposite No. 100, two stepped off the pavement into the road, and threw some small stones at the second-floor window with the idea of rousing "Peter the Painter" and his companion as by a signal from confederates. Very different was the result from what was hoped for. The men must have been on the alert in their room; must in the darkness of the morning have seen the dim figures of the detectives in consultation opposite and witnessed the stepping forward of the officers and their efforts with the stones. The two men, with their powerful automatic pistols ready, did not hesitate. One of them opened fire from the window, and the second shot hit one of the officers, a detective-sergeant, in the chest. He staggered back to the shelter of the gateway and exclaimed, "I am hit!" The third shot pierced the hat of an inspector. Of course, there was no question of the other officers

coming into the open, because with these caged men firing desperately, no person could appear in that open stretch of Sidney Street for a matter of fifty yards on either side without the chance of instant death. A policeman with a shot-gun sent a charge into the window, and apparently caused the two murderers to step into the background for a little. Within a few minutes, however, they were firing from the window again in the hope of hurting some of the detectives in the houses opposite or in the doorways along the street.

The news of the resistance made by the two men was flashed throughout the Metropolis, and within the next hour reinforcements of police and detectives were arriving from all sides. No means, however, could be devised to get at the murderers without loss of life, and the position showed how two men in certain circumstances could keep at bay a tremendous and overwhelming army.

The shots of "Peter the Painter" and his companion came sometimes from one floor and sometimes from another, indicating that they were going from room to room in their endeavour to get a better opportunity of dealing with their assailants. Was it to be wondered at that London began to gather round this little desolate street

in the East End as the news went forth about the business? Sir Melville Macnaghten, Chief of the C.I.D. of Scotland Yard, and Superintendent Quinn, head of the Political Section, came down to superintend matters, and it was pretty soon obvious to them that the police must be kept back for the moment, and that sterner measures must be taken. A telephone message was sent to the Tower, where the Scots Guards were quartered. A detachment of the Guards with rifles and ball cartridge were marched up to Sidney Street. Some of them were strung across the roadway at each end of that fatal hundred yards, and a few were posted in a building in the rear of the house opposite No. 100, from whence they could fire directly into the room.

For nearly an hour before I arrived the soldiers' rifles, shot-guns, and private revolvers had been delivering a stream of lead in the windows of the beleaguered house, but without effect, so far as the two men were concerned, because intermittently they returned the fire from their automatic pistols, equally as powerful for this work as the rifles of the soldiers. When I turned into Sidney Street in my taxi-cab I had to pull up almost at once on account of the converging crowd, and I was then still a couple of hundred yards from the police cordon which kept the crowd back. How

I got through that two hundred yards of people it is difficult to explain, but I pushed and hustled, explaining that I wanted to reach the Scotland Yard chiefs, and I dare say by a certain amount of energy gave an impression to those who made way for me that I had some connection or other with the police. Anyway, it was necessary for me to get to the inner circle. I did it at last.

The besieged Sidney Street lay straight ahead within the police lines. It was empty and silent and commonplace. No sign was there at the moment that it was the scene of tragedy; that within three hundred yards of it on each side tens of thousands of Londoners were thronging upon each other, eager to get a glimpse of the drama, the like of which had never been known before in a great city.

A few yards in front of the police cordon, at the end of the deserted section of street which ran straight ahead, stood a little group of officials, including Sir Melville Macnaghten, Superintendent Froest, Superintendent Quinn, and other famous detectives. On the pavement near them were a dozen or so of journalists and photographers, with a cinematograph machine on its tripod in the foreground. It was hard to realise that instant death lay before him who walked the hundred yards of that empty little street ahead. A line of

five of the Scots Guards were standing across Sidney Street, just in front of the journalists and the officials. They were wearing long grey overcoats, and the butts of their Lee-Metford rifles rested on the roadway. They stood at ease, but their gaze was on the house some fifty or sixty yards from them on the right-hand side, from which were coming occasional reports made by the automatic pistols. At the feet of the soldiers lay newspaper contents-boards, borrowed from a neighbouring newsagent, and it was obvious that should a prone position be necessary for firing, these boards were for keeping the Guardsmen out of the mud.

I had been within the cordon five minutes when a corporal among the Guards emitted something which sounded like "Hipe," and instantly all the Guardsmen flung themselves on the boards and were glancing along their rifles at a head which had been thrust from a second-floor window some sixty yards along Sidney Street on the right. It was not from the assassins' house, but was close to it, and for a second it seemed that one of the men was looking for death. Almost immediately after this came a sharp "Crack!" "Crack!" from No. 100, and the faintest possible trace of smoke, or dirt, or vapour showed that the murderers had fired practically together, one from the first-floor

window and the other from the second-floor window; they were firing at the armed detectives in the house on the opposite side of the street, possibly at the uniformed police blocking the ends of the roadway. In response a fusillade broke out from the concealed detectives, and the "Pop, pop, pop" of the automatic pistols could be distinguished from the "Crack!" of the rifles, and the still heavier report of the old-fashioned revolvers. A detective in a passage nearly opposite the assassins' refuge, partly sheltered by the angle of the wall, was firing almost continuously through the windows with a miniature rifle, and bullets were also descending on the assassins' window from a high, overlooking building behind the house in which the detectives were sheltered.

From now onward for several minutes "Peter the Painter" and his associate were firing furiously, hastening from one floor of the house to another, apparently to mislead the police and soldiers. At the end of the street an occasional shot sang its way through the air over our heads, and more than one, flattened by impact, ricochetted among us. Standing on the kerb, I had my walking-stick touched by a passing bullet and almost knocked from my hand.

The battle, which was now raging between two sides of the street, caused the police authorities

to consider our position unsafe, and they therefore asked us to put ourselves out of range, and incidentally out of sight, in a turning at right angles to Sidney Street. I thereupon crossed to the other side of Sidney Street to a large public-house, a building from the roof of which it was possible to watch all that was happening. Beside one of the chimneys on that roof I had beneath me a picture such as is given to few to see. A 300 yards square of East End houses and narrow streets was hemmed in by encircling police, against whom surged crowds numbering by this time hundreds of thousands. In the middle of that 300 yards square was the deserted street of death, each end guarded with police, bullets crossing and recrossing it in savage exchange every few seconds, sometimes in a kind of angry chorus.

Suddenly, on the pavement below me in Sidney Street, almost at the spot where my walking-stick had been struck a few minutes before, a young man flung his hand to his forehead, and blood came out from between his fingers. A couple of policemen helped him to a neighbouring doorway, and a doctor, who was within the lines, bound up his wound. He had been touched by one of the bullets—fortunately not very seriously injured.

From my roof position I had an excellent sight of the front of the house some sixty or seventy yards

away. It was a section of a great red-brick block of buildings, and its single window on the ground floor, and its two windows on the first floor, its two windows on the second floor, and its single window at the top floor, were all penetrated and shattered with bullets. On the second floor the brickwork round the window frames was chipped and ruined, and little showers of red dust flew up from time to time as bullets caught the edges.

The firing was at its height when there occurred an incident which sent the hearts of onlookers to their mouths, notwithstanding all the previous continuous excitement. A woman rushed from somewhere into the open space of Sidney Street and entered one of the houses not far from No. 100. What could be her errand? was the thought in the minds of all. The question was quickly answered, for she reappeared almost immediately with three children, one of whom she was carrying in her arms. With frantic haste she fled from the bullet-swept street, and succeeded, to the immense relief of all, in getting her charges away into a safe obscurity.

About half an hour after midday I noticed, or thought I noticed, for the first time a fine smoke issuing from the windows on the second floor of No. 100. Whether it really was smoke or was a puff of dust was not easy to decide, and presently,

when it seemed to disappear, I put it down to the continuous firing. Soon, however, it had made its appearance again, and this time there could be no mistake; smoke was coming from the windows, and it was smoke from a fire. Moreover, a considerable cloud was issuing from one of the chimneys.

The firing continued from the windows, but now all one's attention was given to that increasing and very determined smoke. Had the police and soldiers by their bullets in some way started a fire? Had the assassins themselves fired the house? Each alternative was laden with possibilities. Shots came from amid the smoke. Ruthlessly bullets were pouring back into the burning house.

The dullest imagination would have been pricked by the scene and the possibilities that lay behind it, for in the midst of a burning house the murderers, still fighting, were faced with few alternatives. Desperate, indeed, were those alternatives. They might kill themselves; they might remain to the last and die from suffocation or burning; they might make a mad rush with pistols in hand into the street in the frenzied effort to escape when the whole block of buildings was well alight. One tried to picture the state of the minds of the men. Did they know that a hundred weapons were turned on the door from which they must emerge?

Did they realise that in some form or another death must be theirs within two hours?

The smoke increased, the shots from the windows became fewer, and it was about midday when Mr. Winston Churchill, the Home Secretary, arrived, and with the chiefs of police walked to the corner from which the windows of No. 100 could be seen. Fire-engines came dashing up, but they were held back, because it was felt that the firemen would be sacrificed by the bullets of the assassins if they attempted to take up a position in front of the house. A battery of artillery, sent for from Woolwich, was held in reserve in a side-street, ready to blow in the front of the house.

Mr. Winston Churchill, wearing a silk hat, fur coat, and smoking a cigar, walked through the crowds within the danger circle, and put forward many suggestions, which were acted upon. More than once police and firemen volunteered to rush the house, but they were refused permission, for it was held that lives must not be spent thus. By this time many people had been wounded by the fusillade.

Presently smoke was seen issuing from the second floor, and it was apparent that the fire was gradually making its way downstairs as well as upwards. At twenty minutes to two great clouds of black smoke were coming from the second-floor

window, and it was a minute later that we all of us experienced a thrilling moment. Projecting through the smoke from the second-floor window was what seemed to be a begrimed body of a man, who was forcing himself through the burning framework. Instantly a hundred weapons poured lead into that cloud of smoke, and then, as a gust of wind lightened the cloud, it was seen that the object in the smoke was not a man's body, but a bullet-blackened curtain forced out by the draught. From this time onward, a nerve-trying expectancy lay on every one of us watching the burning house, for, with the fire descending to the ground floor the moment was quickly coming nearer for the last desperate rush. Uniformed police, who had hitherto not used weapons, stood at the turnings of Sidney Street with pistols in their hands.

Minute after minute crept by. Smoke was emerging from the ground-floor window now. The last dash, if it were to be made, could not possibly be long deferred. The shots within the house ceased, and some of the watchers entertained the thought that possibly the two men, realising the hopelessness, had killed themselves. But it was only a guess. Quite possibly they were within the doorway, waiting only for the psychological moment when the door should be burst in to rush

forward, weapons in hand, and shoot their way to freedom. All eyes were kept on that fateful front door; all weapons were turned towards it.

There came a moment when it was necessary to take risks. The adjacent buildings were in danger, and property and life might be sacrificed by too much caution. Mr. Churchill conferred with officials as to what should be done, and then Detective-Inspector McCarthy, a big, square-shouldered man, stepped forward from the group, walked quickly along the pavement to the door of the house. We held our breath. This was drama, if you like. Detective McCarthy thrust himself against the door. It fell open before him. One pulsating moment, and then we all breathed again. There was a little smoke and flame from the passage, nothing more.

Mr. Churchill and a sergeant of police carrying a double-barrelled shot-gun were a few yards behind, and they were the next persons to go up to the door of the burning house. Firemen came rushing forward now, and within thirty seconds the hoses were being arranged so that water might be directed upon the flames.

Later the bodies of the two men were found within the dismantled and ruined buildings. One of them had a bullet wound through the head. How the other died it was impossible to tell.

Some time, while we had been watching, the efforts of the two men had been stopped; and while we were waiting on the outside expecting and fearing them, they had sunk down overwhelmed and had died.

Altogether sixteen persons—policemen, firemen, a soldier, and civilians were injured as a result of the battle

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